By Harrison Ainsworth

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SIR JOHN CHIVERTON.

A ROMANCE.

She died before her time.
WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

LONDON:
JOHN EBERS, OLD BOND STREET.
MDCCCXXVI.

STACKELL, ARROWSMITH, AND HODGES, JOHNSON'S COURT.

DEDICATORY STANZAS

TO —— ——.

When last we parted, Lady, 'twas in tears ;
Thy cheek was dimmed with sorrow's trickling dew,
And from my heart the grief of many years,
Hoarded 'till nigh forgotten, burst anew,
Sad offerings to love and memory true;
Shall ever memory faint, or love be cold ?
Ah, no ! that cheek may lose its breathing hue,
And those dear eyes their living beams withhold,
But love shall still endure, with faith unknown, untold.

II.

Accept the tribute that to thee I bring,
(It is the first, and it will be the last,)
The leisure fruit of fancy's wandering:
But fancy rules no more—her sway is past,
And into other paths my course is cast;
Me now no more shall fiction's dreams beguile;
Their hues like fading rainbows vanish fast;
My feet shall tread in ways of drearier toil,
And fiction hide her wreath, and poesy her smile.

III.

Yet, if to me a loftier lyre were given,
And round my harp were twined a brighter wreath;
If I could snatch immortal verse from heaven,
And pour its melody to souls beneath,
It may be that I would not cease to breathe
Thy name in accents love should make divine,
And round thy beauteous brows a band enwreath,
A garland bright, whose flowers should brightly shine,
More lovely, and more bright, when sunned by smiles of thine.

IV.

My Lady Love! am I not far from thee?—
Far, far away—but soon again we meet;
Ye moments swift, oh, yet more swiftly flee,
Ye slower hours, away on winged feet;
Waft me, oh, waft me upon pinions fleet,
Give me again my vows of love to tell,
Steal fond approval from her blushes sweet,
Adore her glowing cheek and bosom's swell,
And win the silent thoughts, that in that bosom dwell.

SIR JOHN CHIVERTON.

Eustace.—Is that the merrie old hall? Doth its table still groan with the chyne—and its tankards foam as they were wont? Doth old Badge, the servitor, still sit at the porch; and Sir John telleth he at his third cup, how he hunted the boar at Furness; and of his merrie pranks with the Keeper's daughter at Bowland? Talketh Master Hugh, the parson, still of Beza and Whittaker, and the New Doctrines—and goeth the Steward forth at Martinmas with his staff, to call the tenants to suit and service—and to drink their Lord's health in a humming cup of the best—Are these still as heretofore?

Lancelot.—Lord help thee, Eustace! Have thy thoughts gone a wool-gathering? Sir John and the Parson and the Steward, sleep soundly enough under an *hic jacet* this many longsome years! Little of festivity seeth the old Hall now! Its courts are grass grown, and its floors are mottled with mud! Clean gone are its old faces, and it looketh for all the world like the prodigal who had run his career of jollity, and now aketh his orts at the spittal.

MERRIE DAIES, OR HIE AWAY FOR HULME HALL.

SIR JOHN CHIVERTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE HALL.

THERE is a degree of pleasure, not unmingled with sad and melancholy reflections, in comparing with the records that remain to us of the manners and private life of our distant progenitors, the mouldering and dilapidated remnants of their habitations, which time and the wasting hand of violence have suffered to survive; the monuments of a people, whose habits, long become obsolete, owe their existence, even in remembrance, to the minute and laborious zeal of

the chronologers of the past, and the excursive researches of antiquarian curiosity. It is gratifying to have somewhat real and tangible to connect us with days and scenes, on which we are wont to look back with the sensations of the landscape gazer, who straining his glances through the gathering twilight, sees in the dim, though it may be beautiful outlines of the indistinct prospect, much to awaken, but little to satisfy his feelings of inquisitive admiration; vainly endeavouring to distinguish, until he almost doubts the reality of the blended mass of wood, and mountain, and gleamy lake, which growing every moment more dim and shapeless, leave it to the power of fancy to adorn, and fill up the traces so faintly supplied by observation. It is thus we picture to ourselves, the hearth glowing with the ruddy volumes of cheerful blaze; the hospitality, arising to profusion, of the well stocked board; the warm-hearted, sparkling joviality of the revels; and the gay and gallant companies of the halls of our proge-

nitors; contemplated more eagerly, because, ever clinging to the bright and the brilliant, the imagination rarely impedes its workings with tardy inquiries into darker tints of the piece. Uniting with these venerable edifices, our ideas of the splendour, and gallantry, and romance of the days with which they are coeval, we fondly imagine that the spirit of high romance, that in early days animated their magnificence, continues yet to linger round, and haunt them in their decay.

It not unfrequently happens that the remains of these antique mansions are overlooked, and disregarded, not merely when buried in sequestered corners, but even when placed in the vicinity of populous cities, and cultivated districts. The eye becomes familiar with them, and seeks not to inquire into the origin or decorations of structures, which it has learnt to consider as indifferent and every day objects; and it is, in general, the part of the casual stranger, to discover and admire those picturesque beau-

ties of situation and architecture, that have failed to attract the observation of those, who think not of looking so near home for subjects of interest or curiosity. A specimen of such habitations, so situated, exists at this day, in a fair state of perfection, in one of the northern counties of England.

So few, indeed, are the changes which Chiverton Hall has undergone in its general structure, that a tolerable idea may still be formed of it, as it stood in the days of its pristine beauty. It is true, that its noble entirety has been subdivided into humble habitations, whose squalid appearance differs lamentably from the gay and magnificent decorations and accompaniments, which as the residence of its earlier possessors, it could have boasted of;—the pavement is broken and neglected, and rendered in many places uneven, from the partial displacing of the stones, by the rank weeds that have sprung up in the interstices. Broken glass, ruinous gateways, aud courts strewed with nameless and ac-

cumulating litter, give to the place, on a near approach, an appearance of neglect and desolation, that jars most harshly upon the mind, when reverting to the fancy-traced picture of its ancient splendour. But the building itself retains much of its original aspect, and rising from a distance, on the right, imbedded in the spreading foliage that surrounds it, still presents to the eye of observation, an object of no common beauty and interest.

It is with Chiverton Hall, however, in its former state, that our present concern chiefly lies, as it stood some two centuries back. Rising from the summit of a rock, that sprung abruptly from the spreading waters of the river, by which it was guarded on the west, the building approached so near the brink of the precipice, as to afford space only for a narrow foot-path. From the opposite side of the river, the edifice presented its most irregular, though not less beautiful aspect. A projecting semi-

oval turret, the lower part of which was used as a chapel, and in the days of papal dominion, had been consecrated to the services of the Roman ritual, advanced beyond the buildings that extended from it on either side, and which contained the apartments usually allotted to the ladies of the family, and their attendants. Along the entire south side of the house, opened the windows of the chief banquetting-room, or dining hall, whose panes glowing in many colours, and quaintly arranged, exhibited a rich specimen of an art now little known. From these windows, the view lay directly into a spacious garden, curiously laid out, and painfully ornamented, according to the heavy and constrained taste of the period. The garden was bounded by a wall, surrounding the mansion, and which, from its height and apparent strength, had been probably constructed with an eye to its utility, as a barrier of defence in the event of an unforeseen attack; a contin-

gency not so distant in the eventful and unsettled times to which we now revert, as in the present age of calmness and security.

The principal entrance to the hall was from the east, and was formed by a spacious archway, surmounted by a square tower, and opening into a quadrangular court, surrounded by connected buildings. To the right of the entrance, were doors communicating with the banqueting room, and different smaller apartments. Opposite to these, were the culinary apartments of the establishment, and the space between, forming the third side of the square, was occupied by larders, refectories, and rooms allotted to the higher class of domestics. The remaining side consisted of offices, and the upper stories of the buildings contained the dormitories of the residents, all more or less externally ornamented.

Such was the general outline of the exterior of the mansion, which, according to the taste of the period, was far from being devoid of orna-

ment. The plaistered walls were coloured with regular chequers of black and white, interspersed with trefoils and other figures, varied as the skill or taste of the artist had directed. As usual, in this style of architecture, the wood work was profuse; timber then forming the principal material, in the structure of domestic habitations. Here it had been used with an unsparing hand, and, wherever the situation of the beams admitted, had been ornamented with elaborate carvings, the chief of which were displayed on the frames of the casements, and the extremities of the rafters, and those solid beams which, protruding beyond the walls on which they rested, supported the successive projections of the superior stories, or tiers of apartments.—But the chief triumph of art was in the execution of the massive oaken pillars, that guarded the great gateway; the strange representations and carvings of which claimed, at least, the credit of perseverance and assiduity, if not of taste, to the operator; whilst above the arch,

was suspended an enormous hatchment, whereon were depicted, in the pomp of heraldry, the armorial bearings of the Chivertons.

The natural advantages of situation conspired to lend beauty and interest to the edifice. The rock, on which the building was placed, was rugged and precipitous, and threw a deep gloom over the waters by which its base was washed. The crumbling of the stone, mingled with the earth casually fallen from the summit, had composed a scanty stratum of soil, sufficient to afford nourishment to a wild and rank vegetation, that spread a dark covering over the face of the precipice, increasing, rather than diminishing, the gloomy sullenness of its aspect; while the beams of light from above were interrupted by the branches of one or two firs, that stood on the brink, and a giant sycamore, that grasping the rock with its spreading and sinuous roots, broke with its wild appearance the uniform continuity of the bank.—Following the path which wound in front of the building, and skirted the high

wall of the garden, the gaze was lost in a thickly wooded domain. The level plain, stretching on the eastern side of the hall, was more scantily clothed with trees, and its close sward was intersected with a broad path, leading up to the arched entrance of the building; whilst the ground, sloping on the north, lay open, till bounded by an eminence, crowned with a long row of beeches, whose leafy tops, intermingling with each other, formed a mass of dark foliage, rising like a thick cloud upon the sky, which beamed between the trunks like the expanse of a distant sea; and the whole, glowing under the influence of a summer morning's sun, was arrayed in lively hues of beauty and splendour.

How different is, alas! the present, though, even yet beautiful, appearance of the same spot. The rich and profuse banquets, of which the noble dining hall was once the scene, have given way to the scanty board of poverty;—the songs and harpings of minstrels, the gallant conversation of brilliant companies,—the bright sallies of

wit, and tender conceits, which so often those walls have listened to, have faded away, as unsubstantial and transient as the breath on which they rose; and are succeeded by the murmurings of discontent, or the irritated tones of strife, and domestic discord. The hand of the spoiler has been there; the figured tapestry of lady's bower has long since faded from the walls; the laboured carvings, and profuse decorations, of the wainscotted hall are removed, or defaced; and the glories of the painted roof are lost in the coverings of whitewash and accumulated filth.—Timber levelled for the purposes of traffic;—plains covered with upstart dwellings, and redolent of brick kilns, have introduced as much change in the surrounding country, as in the hall itself. Yet still retaining its original outline, and some faint traces of the natural and artificial embellishments that heretofore made it attractive, it still continues worthy to be sought for and admired by the lover of taste, or of antiquity.

The day had risen brightly. A few individuals passed between various parts of the house, domestics of the place, or half military retainers lounging toand fro, as if claiming, by virtue of the buff-coats, steel caps, and broad swords, with which they were accoutred, an exemption, except when in attendance on their Lord, from all care and occupation. But a numerous group issuing suddenly from the archway, summoned these idlers from their strollings, and communicated an instantaneous life and vivacity to the scene.

The personage who, among this group, must instantly have been distinguished as the principal, as well from the deference paid to him, as from his manner and demeanour, was a man of apparently not more than thirty years of age, and of an aspect, which, at the first sight, seemed noble and prepossessing. In stature, he was somewhat above the middle size; well shaped, and rather strong set. His features, though handsome—almost beautiful, were to close examination scarcely attractive, wearing

an expression of strong, but suppressed passion. Clusters of dark and curling hair strayed from beneath his jewelled cap, which was adorned by a heron's plume fastened by a clasp of gold. His eyes were bright and black; too much so to be pleasing, and the same sinister cast which dwelt in his features, was communicated to their glance.—He wore a dress of the fashion generally adopted by the superior classes of the time, consisting of a doublet of dark satin, slashed with salmon coloured silk, fitting tight to his body, and joined to hose of the same materials, puffed out according to the prevailing mode.—His boots were of blue Spanish leather, and a short cloak of deep purple velvet, richly embroidered, and fastened by a massy golden clasp, hung from his shoulders, and completed the ordinary articles of his wearing apparel.—In addition to these, his hands were now clothed with hawking gloves, and his closed fist supported a lordly gerfalcon, completely attired with her embossed hood and knotted jesses, on

the varvels attached to which was stamped the figure of a mermaid, the armorial bearing of the family. The legs of the hawk were hung with Milan bells,—jingling with a silver sound at every motion of the bird.

But the attention with which a spectator would have beheld the handsome appearance and commanding frame thus presented to his view, was speedily claimed by a new object. A beautiful female, whose exquisite figure was betrayed to admiration by the riding habit in which she was enveloped, suddenly issued from the gateway, following the gallant whom we have described. Her head attire, of black velvet, was richly ornamented; and being depressed in the middle rose on either side, so as distantly to resemble a reversed crescent, a fashion then generally followed, though in the present instance far from attaining the extravagant pitch to which it was frequently carried, forming a subject for abundant animadversion from the satirists of the day, who loudly de-

claimed against the horned head dresses of the ladies. Her jet black hair escaping from beneath this covering, and scorning the restraint of the silken bands that vainly endeavoured to confine them, clustered around her temples, and straying to her neck, rested on a throat with whose whiteness they were deeply and beautifully contrasted, and whose purity was only to be equalled by the forehead, which her head dress partly exposed to view. The similitude of her features to those of the individual who had preceded her, plainly indicated their affinity; but though the lineaments of her countenance strikingly resembled those of her brother, their freedom from the repulsive cast with which his were shaded, rendered them far more engaging. The same firm resolution that dwelt in his aspect was perceptible in hers, but tempered with a gentle and subdued expression, amounting almost to melancholy, and seeming to indicate the faculty of passive and unwearying endurance, as the look of the brother betokened

active and restless boldness. Her dark eyes, bright rather than brilliant, beamed with an expression so pensive, and yet so lovely, that the heart of the beholder borrowed for a moment its tone from their glances, and became itself enamoured of sadness.

She also bore upon her hand a hawk, a tercel gentle restrained by silken jesses. Sir John Chiverton, her brother, assisted her as she mounted the chesnut steed, whose curving neck and pawing feet denoted the impatience with which she awaited her rider; and so gracefully and easily did its mistress govern the animal, that its motions seemed instinctively to harmonize with every wish of the lovely equestrian. A slim greyhound bounded by her side, and a variety of domestics were in attendance, to lend assistance in the progress of the sport.

The celebrity of hawking at this period, as an amusement peculiarly set apart for, and eagerly followed by the gallant, the wealthy, and the noble, added to the excessive difficulty

of training, and consequent value of the hawks, rendered the falconer an officer of some estimation in the household of families of rank. Incessant watchfulness, unwearying perseverance, and skill acquired by long practice, often failed of success in reclaiming the bird from its native wildness. The individual who held this station in the hall of the Chivertons was a thin ancient man, his features charged with an inordinate expression of self-importance. He was dressed in a suit principally consisting of blue cloth, ornamented with silver; wore a broad brimmed drab hat, turned up in front, and was distinguished by a silver chain hanging from his neck, and supporting a badge of the same metal, on which was engraved the figure of a hawk, bearing on its breast an escutcheon, charged with the mermaid of the family. Two inferior attendants, who followed under his direction to search for and raise the game, were dressed in a similar style, though in less ornamented habiliments.

Along with the Knight were several personages who seemed to hold a middle station between friends and retainers; a class to whom he afforded the freedom of his hall, with perhaps a further occasional extension of his liberality, to enable them to ruffle in their gay cloaks and slashed doublets, in return for which he tacitly claimed, and they readily rendered, their services whenever occasion might require their exercise. These too were his ordinary associates when disposed for company; some could tell a merry tale, others commanded a good song, and the dice and draught board filled up intervals of idleness. They sat above the salt on ordinary days, and when the board was surrounded by their superiors, were well content to sink a step; willing to compound their state for the substantial enjoyments of Chiverton Hall, and desiring nothing more than the continuance of a mode of life requiring little exertion and less thought; though its easy course was liable to interruption, when their host called for

their services. Yet as these calls were not frequent, and their recurrence always uncertain, their anticipation was never permitted to disturb the indolent luxury of the present.

A few retainers of another class, stout men at arms, whose steel caps and buff jerkins denoted their station, strolled about, desirous to be spectators of a sport then in such high repute, and mingling with the other attendants, composed a varied group, and by their heavy slinging step, and the careless boldness of their demeanour, contrasted with the officious activity, and obsequious servility, of the accompanying domestics.

It was a gallant sight, to see so goodly a company, as they passed the open court before the entrance of the hall, and sallied forth in quest of their amusement into the sloping plain that lay to their right. The rich dresses of the riders, mounted on fair steeds that bounded along, their studded harness flashing in the sun, and their reins jingling and chiming with the silver

melody of the hawk's bells; the towering plumes waving in every breeze, the light laugh and quick repartee of the horsemen, lent life and excitement to the scene; whilst the numbers that followed in the rear, the attendants and men at arms, added to the diversity of the picture, and increased by their rude and joyous mirth, the giddy whirl of enjoyment, that dwelt in the light minds of most of the partakers of the festivity.

They had ridden not more than two or three hundred yards, when the falconer approaching to the Knight of Chiverton, with a tone and manner, in which respect for his master was blended with a manifest conceit of himself, informed him, that would the gentles determine whose hawk should first fly, he would venture to say, that a fall of woodcocks might be found among the moist ground to the right.

"What say ye then gallants," said the Knight, "whose bird shall first adventure the striking of a woodcock?"

" Who my Lord," replied the young man who rode near him, the plaitings of his ruff, and adjustment of his well combed and anointed hair, studied to the very perfection of critical nicety, " who shall hesitate to give place when beauty stands to take the lead? The Lady Ellice's tercel hath a soaring wing, and a steady eye.—Let it take precedence."

" Well Ellice," said the knight, " you see you are designed to lead our sports to-day, for no one seems to object to this courteous gentleman's proposal—but God's santy," continued he, turning towards the last speaker, " thou connest thy words so daintily, my sister is fain to blush at the commendation thou bestowest in words, as soaring as thou reportest her own gentil-hawk.—Why—I swear thou art in love, man, and hast painfully perused some huge romance, or book of dainty devices, whence thou wouldst gather language and eloquence, to persuade thy mistress to take delight in thy lack lustre eye, and pear coloured beard. Can any throw light

on this matter—knows any man the Oriana that hath captured the heart of this Amadis?"

"Oh! my Lord," exclaimed in answer a lively youth, "the history of his affections is well known. A peerless rustic, the divinity of a cottage, came athwart his eye shot, as practising in solitude his choicest steps, he sought to charm the fauns and satyrs with his gallant lavoltas. So he came in a cinque-a-pace; loved with a look, wooed with words culled from choice ballads, and hath ever since wandered with braced arms, the blind God's very meacock, as melancholy as a black hawk."

"And as choleric as a russet one," interrupted another.

"Aye," resumed the previous speaker, "and moreover, to cause it to be well with him in the damsel's eye, he hath laid out a fair moiety of his worldly treasure, in tricking himself out, as fine as a new painted post at a sheriff's door—pray God he be not soon more intimate with the sheriff's followers, than the sheriff's worship."

"A catastrophe not unlikely," said he, who had before spoken, "for the other half of his estate flies fast, in welted gowns and falling bands to adorn the lovely Rusticana."

A reply of some sharpness was rising upon the lips of the indignant Vivian, when a sudden cry from the falconer, interrupting the conversation, arrested the attention of the party. In a moment the woodcocks were on the wing, and the fair Ellice, loosing the jesses from her fingers, and removing the hood, with which the eyes of the hawk were veiled, cast him off in pursuit of his prey.

Taking an upward direction, the bird soared above the terrified fugitives, and hung over them as if selecting his prey. It was in vain that they dispersed in every varied direction; the piercing eye of the falcon had singled out its quarry, which, as if conscious of his fate, flew at first wildly and fearfully, until driven to use every art to elude the near approach of its enemy, it rose and fell; now rising, as if to

hide itself in the clouds from the ken of the falcon, and again, sinking to the earth to seek some friendly brake to shield it from destruction; but, wherever it turned its wearied wing, the hawk followed with rentless perseverance, true as its shadow. At length, the devoted bird, espying a covert, which if gained, might haply secure a safe retreat from danger, dived rapidly downwards to take possession of the seat of refuge. It was a vain attempt, for the quick sight of the enemy anticipated its purpose, and the tercel, stooping down from its high flight, descended with a resistless swoop upon the fated quarry; planting its strong talons in the back of its prey, it clove open with its beak, the skull of the victim, thereby terminating the aërial chase, whilst the falconer, hastening to the spot, for the party had followed as near as possible the direction which the birds had taken, disengaged the hawk from his prey, feeding, and rewarding him, and commanding his two followers, in the meantime, to look out for fresh prey for the

Knight's gerfalcon, which was next to fly. During this interval, several of the followers, not actively engaged in the sports of their superiors, were imitating at humble distance their diversions, for having discovered a flock of larks, a hobby hawk, carried by the leader of the men at arms, was flown, and hanging over the terrified birds, who crowded fearfully to the ground, detained them in that position, until a net was drawn over the flock, which, incapacitated by terror, became an easy prey to the sportsmen.

A nobler object of pursuit than had yet been raised, awaited the Knight's gerfalcon. A loud and exulting shout announced the discovery of a stately heron, which, roused from his station on the edge of a spreading pool, swung open his long wings, and sailed through the air; his feathery crest streaming as he flew, and his pursuer, eager for the attack, beating his strong path after the lordly prey. For some time, the same scene ensued, which had previously taken place in the chase of the wood-

cock; but in the middle air, when hardly pressed by the falcon, the heron turned upon his antagonist, and shooting forth his long neck, aimed at the hawk with his sharp bill a blow, which had it taken effect, would probably have decided the contest in favour of the pursued; but the falcon, accustomed to such encounters, evaded the stroke, and gaining a new advantage from the unsuccessful attack of its opponent, pressed on so fiercely, that the heron, unable to sustain the conflict, once more betook itself to flight. Blinded with its wounds, and distracted with terror, the fugitive rushed downwards through the air, with all the velocity it could command. The consequences of this movement were such as could be neither anticipated nor guarded against. The heron in its wild and misgoverned descent had approached near the party of the Chivertons, when suddenly varying from the right line, which its precipitous course had hitherto taken, and turning off in an oblique direction, it dashed itself in flying, against

the head of Ellice's steed, and ere it had recovered itself from the interruption its enemy the falcon had arrested its further progress, and a fierce struggle ensued. Terrified at the unexpected attack, the horse sprung away, and enraged by the flapping wings of the birds, speeded away with such ungoverned violence, that the endeavours of the gentle rider to restain her courser were wholly fruitless. But with that presence of mind, of which her countenance bespoke the habitual possession, she succeeded in retaining her seat, and in avoiding the branches of the trees, with which the plain was thinly scattered.

In following the flight of the hawks, the party had left the hall at a considerable distance. To this Ellice now drew near, when her steed taking a different direction, rushed furiously towards the sloping ground which led to the brink of the river. Her cries for assistance were unheard, and there seemed indeed scarce a possibility of such assistance reaching her. Her brother, with those of his company who

had hastened with hopes of arresting the progress of her steed, were compelled to take a circuitous route, fearful of urging her horse to still greater speed by pursuing its footsteps, and were far behind. The horse arrived at the sloping bank of the stream, bounded down it; and in a moment more, his plunge in the waters sounded in the ears of his fainting rider, who exhausted by her previous terror and fatigue, and despairing of succour, sank into insensibility, and falling from her saddle, was about to be borne away by the waters of the river.

From the imminent peril in which she was thus involved, at the only moment when aid would not have been too late, a deliverer was at hand to rescue the seemingly devoted girl. When returning consciousness at length unclosed her streaming and languid eyelids, she found herself supported upon a stone bench, rudely constructed, and sheltered by the overhanging arch of a small and rocky cave. This had formerly been the residence of a hermit,

who by long perseverance in a life of abstinence and rigorous penance, had acquired among the few rude inhabitants of the district a reputation of more almost than mortal sanctity. Even after the death of the venerated anchoret, the hermit's house, by which name the cell was generally known, was frequented by comers from surrounding parts of the country; nor are there wanting, as is well known to the professed collectors of marvellous legends, sundry traditional anecdotes of feats, little less than miraculous, performed, as well during the life, as after the death of its inhabitant, at the secluded cave. Superstition outlives its objects, and a long succession of years were unable entirely to divest the spot of the degree of veneration to which it had attained.

The aspect of the place itself was indeed such as not to be beheld without feelings of interest, deepening almost into awe. The cave was excavated in a rock, which rising perpendicularly to the height of about twelve feet,

bounded the lower extremity of a sloping hollow, whose width extended to some half dozen yards. The pious ingenuity of ancient tenants had sculptured the face of the rock with rude mouldings and imagery, interspersed with Biblical sentences carved in a gothic, and now almost unknown character. Many of these were defaced and illegible by time, or the interstices filled up with accumulations of dark and thick moss. The summit of the stone was crowned with stunted oaks, and the clinging arms of the giant ivy winding along the brink, sported amid the crumbling ornaments and inscriptions, a wild contrast of vitality and decay. The sombre gloom of antiquity seemed to hang over the spot, and to consecrate it to silence and to solitude.

The entrance to the cell was a narrow doorway, which, except a small aperture on the left, formed the only passage for light into the habitation. The sole apartment of which this place of penance consisted, was devoid of furniture or

ornament; a stone seat hewn in the native rock ran round the chamber, and a semi-circular recess in the extremity contained a rude altar of the same material, surmounted with a pedestal, formerly the support of a crucifix, which the hand of the spoiler had long since destroyed. But desolate and chilling as was the aspect of the spot, marks of an inhabitant were yet discoverable. A jug of water stood upon the altar, and a few glimmering ashes cast from a corner of the apartment a dim and fitful gleam. A heap of dry leaves, and some logs of wood, lay at a short distance.

On recovering her powers of reflection and remembrance, Ellice perceived a man, whom she doubted not to be her preserver, busily endeavouring to raise a flame from the almost expired embers. The ruddy glare that arose from the kindling fuel, disclosed to her the general appearance of the stranger, for the natural light which found entrance into the cave, was too faint and uncertain to afford her information.

His stature, as he raised himself from the occupation over which he had bent, was, to say the least, tall; his figure, noble and prepossessing. His hat thrown aside, exposed a head of brown and thickly curled hair; the features were not at the moment visible. His dress, though partaking of little of the gaiety of the age, seemed such as denoted the gentleman of the time. It was in the early part of Elizabeth's age. But a hasty glance, by so imperfect a light, could tell no more of any object; and the eyes of the gazer were scarcely averted, when the stranger, turning and approaching to the object of his solicitude, was about to convey her within the more immediate influence of the blaze that now curled up in lofty flakes. But at the moment when Ellice, faintly endeavouring to rise, by so doing assured her deliverer of her recovered sensibility, their eyes met. The effects of the recognition that ensued were equally remarkable and instantaneous. With a scream of astonishment, she sprung from her

recumbent posture; gazed for a moment wildly and fearfully, as if doubting whether he who stood before her was indeed a living form; and unable from weakness to retain her upright position, would have fallen on the earth, had not an arm been ready to receive and support her, though from its violent trembling, and the agitated demeanour of the stranger, it might have been doubted which was really most in need of assistance. As she lay in her deliverer's arms, a violent shuddering passed over her frame; she raised her eyes as it ceased, fearfully to the stranger's—"It is—it must be he!"

"Doubt it not, my Ellice," returned the stranger; "doubt not that it is thy Reginald; who hoped not that these lips again should call thee his, or these arms e'er fondly clasp the form that now trembles to his heart; who——"

"Nay, cease, Reginald," interrupted Ellice; "cease: the heart that has forgot to feel, should teach the lips to forget to speak the passion they once feigned. Why talk of hope, when the

wish was wanting? You wished not to behold her whom once you swore to enthrone in your heart; whose smile was once your pleasure; whose approbation was once the aim of all your cares. You said so then; and I, poor fool, believing the words, and thinking that—that I was loved——"

"*Thinking* that thou *wert* loved!" exclaimed the stranger; "Ellice, my—no—now no longer mine—torture me not too far—day hath witnessed—night hath witnessed—months—years of hopeless misery have witnessed my love; and now to doubt—to mock—to insult me thus. Thy heart was wont to be tender."

"Were it not tender," replied the weeping maiden, "tender even beyond a woman's folly, thou wouldst not see me thus: these idle tears should ere this have ceased to flow for one who remembered not his vows, save as toys, as light as the air in which they were spent; formed but for the brief endurance of a summer hour, but fated to destroy the peace of a heart, to which

they seemed the breathings of sincerity. But this is weaker than I thought I could have been," continued she, withdrawing herself from his support, and, by a strong effort, repressing the tears that trembled on her eyelids: "it is time we parted; and yet I would not lightly pass over the generous service you have done me. I owe to you my life, and though the gift be little worth, believe me my thanks are sincere, and Ellice not ungrateful."

"I obey you, lady," answered he, "and yet, to part thus:—Ellice, you have wronged me. I have loved dearly, and suffered deeply—loved when hope was no longer the attendant of love; and now, when chance has unexpectedly thrown you to my arms, and shewn me that Ellice yet lives——"

"Lives, Reginald!" interrupted the lady.

"Aye, lives; for lying tongues had told me you were no more; and I, in heart a widower, even now am here, come to weep upon your

grave, and now find you yet living, but so changed that——"

"Cease, Reginald, I pray, I beseech you," interrupted the maiden; "your words are strange, and doubts still stranger throng upon me. Methinks," added she, passing her slender fingers over her moist and chilly forehead, "my brain is well nigh touched by this untoward—and yet, not so, since!"—a light blush, penetrating through the paleness of her cheek, spoke what she would have said in a language more flattering to a lover's heart than all the force of words. "But spare me your reproaches, we have been both deceived; by whom and wherefore I know not, but this is no time or place for explanations. My brother and his followers seek me, and will soon be here. But why, why do you look so wildly?"

"Brother! do you call him," exclaimed the youth, "call him not—think him not a brother; he it was that feigned your death—he that de-

tained my steps in distant lands—he that, to accomplish his own selfish views of ambition, wrests from you your inheritance, and would have made two faithful—they were once two happy hearts, Ellice,—the stepping stones to raise him in his course of darkness."

"Thou dost him wrong, in truth thou dost," replied the lady; "he loves me as a brother should a sister. There's not a wish, a fancy, I could frame but he would gratify at any price—*he* injure me?—No! sooner would he see perish all his state, and all his hopes, than his Ellice—than even the little finger of this hand should suffer."

"Alas, Ellice, your heart, pure in its simplicity, knows not how to suspect. The show of kindness dims your eyesight, and makes you blind to the heaviest wrongs. But a day of justice," added he, grasping suddenly the handle of his sword, "a day will come when the deceiver shall meet his due; when the wrongs he

has inflicted shall return on his own head with double weight; when——"

"Cease to talk thus," interrupted she, "is it with threats against a brother you would entertain a sister's ear? What is the meaning of your dark hints, I know not; this only I know, that his love to me has been unceasing and unchanging. But cast away these wild designs; come not near my brother as an enemy; touch him not—harm him not—by all the love thou ever borest me, by all we have suffered, by all we hope, I conjure, I charge thee to have no feud with him."

The reply of the youth was prevented by the sudden entrance of some one into the cave; at the sound of whose footsteps Ellice and her preserver, suddenly turning their glances towards the entrance of the place, saw advancing an individual whose appearance was productive of the greatest surprise, scarcely unmingled with fear. His figure, short and uncommonly thick

set, was sheltered by a dress of the coarsest materials, and irregular fashion. Hose of blue, and a doublet of dirty red woollen, were but partially concealed by a sleeveless garment, resembling a modern carter's frock, of a dark drab, and corresponding in substance with the remainder of his garments. Clumsy boots, formed of oxhide, with the hair outwards, defended his huge splay feet; and his head was covered with a cap of a like nature, while a broad leathern belt girt round his middle, sustained a pouch, and a long ambiguous weapon, suited either for the ordinary employment of a knife, or for occasional use in dealings of another nature. He held in his hand a staff, armed at the upper end with a strong iron hook, and shod at the lower extremity with the same metal.

The features of the new comer were well suited to his person and habiliments; his grizzled black hair hung from beneath his cap, in huge disorderly masses, over a forehead, thronged

with deep wrinkles, and rendered hideous by a wound, which, though healed, was still betrayed by a seam running longitudinally from one to the other temples, dividing the skin over each eye-brow, so as almost to leave bare the frontal bone. His eyes were placed deep, and shot forth from their shaggy sockets, looks, indicative only of surly and discontented malice; an expression with which every feature was charged. His right hand was closed round the staff which he carried, but when that was for a moment laid aside, and his extended palm exposed to view, there was visible on the flesh, the deep impress of a burn, the scar of which took the form of the well known letter, that proclaimed him branded as the felon his appearance and demeanour so strongly denoted him to be.

The dark glance of the tenant of the cave, for such he was, was directed to Ellice and her lover, and bespoke surprise; which, however, was instantly subdued into the stupid look of indifference, either natural, or assumed as the

habitual cloak of his feeling, towards those with whom he came in contact. Ellice shrunk back at the sight of him, and grasped, unconsciously, the arm of her companion, who immediately addressed the object of her apparent alarm.

" I have made free with thy fuel, friend," said he, " observing that the new comer had fixed his eyes on the glowing embers, whose now decaying blaze contended with the portion of daylight, that found its way into the cavern."

" Hast thou ever seen me before, that thou callest me friend ?" interrupted he who was addressed, in a tone strangely harsh and monotonous.

" A truce to thine impertinence," said Prestwyche, sternly; " whatever thou callest thyself take this, it will pay thee for thy faggots."

" I wanted no pay," growled he of the strange apparel, " but as thy money burns thee, good youth, here are fingers can grasp it tighter." As he spoke, he opened the pouch at his girdle,

and dropping into it the coin he had received, retired to a farther part of the cave, seemingly inattentive to the speech or motions of his guests.

"Let us begone," said Ellice, "the air of this place is thick and noisome, they will be here ere—Hark! I hear the trampling of their horses."

In fact, immediately upon their leaving the cavern, they perceived, at a short distance, glimmering through the trees, the gay riders of Chiverton's party.—Ellice looked fearfully at her companion.

"Reginald thou wilt be calm—be prudent—thou wilt not——"

"Ellice," returned he, "fear me not: I will attempt no violence, until compelled in self-defence;—to your wishes I sacrifice revenge—the memory of our mutual wrongs. And if," he added, "taking her trembling hand, I knew that Reginald Prestwyche yet holds in Ellice's heart,

the place she once allowed him to think he possessed, I might be happy almost even in parting from you."

Did he deceive himself, in thinking that a scarce perceptible return—too slight for any but a lover to feel, of the pressure he bestowed upon the hand he held, answered fondly for his hopes!—But further converse was here precluded, for the Knight of Chiverton approaching with his followers, perceived his sister, sprung from his horse, and rushing towards her, encountered the glance of Prestwyche, who stood by her, in collected and undaunted composure.

The fabled powers of the basilisk could not have caused greater dismay to the beholder, than did the look of Ellice's lover to her brother. He hesitated for a moment, in a conflict between pride and confusion, and then, suddenly turning aside, remounted his horse; and calling to his followers to conduct his sister, rode away.

Some emotion this rencounter produced, ap-

parently amongst the members of his party :—the elders of the company looked at each other knowingly, and suspiciously, and one or two put their hands to their swords ;—the younger men gazed as ignorant of the meaning of what was going forward. The hesitation which prevailed, was speedily dissipated by the behaviour of Prestwyche, who advancing with a determined coolness, that at once awed down any signals of hostility, previously displayed, surrendered his companion to the care of one of the party.

" Since the Lord of Chiverton deems it needless to thank a stranger, who has been fortunate enough to preserve his sister, I must, gentlemen, yield her to your protection. Yet, tell him from me, that there was once some slight acquaintance between us, which, should we meet again, may perchance be renewed. My name you may say is Prestwyche—he may possibly remember it.—Lady," he added, turning to Ellice, " I wish you, farewell." His glance told how temporary a farewell was intended.

She returned, with the peculiar grace which distinguished her, his deep parting obeisance, and accompanying her brother's followers, left him still gazing on her retreating form.

As they approached the river, the ferryman unloosed his boat, and the party, after the little vessel had twice or thrice performed its voyage, were landed on the farther part of the stream, and immediately entered the hall.

CHAPTER II.

THE PHYSICIAN.

" Look who would see Destruction, lie a-sunning
In that perfidious model of face falsehood,
Hell is drawn grinning."

THE GAME AT CHESS.

THOUGH the strong emotions, which had been raised in Ellice's bosom, by the appearance in the character of her preserver, of one, whom she had been made to believe far distant, and with whom her own fate was deeply—too deeply for her peace of mind—interwoven, had, by a temporary excitation, enabled her to bear up against the terror and fatigue of her accident, the effects of the shock now became more sensible, and she was no sooner conducted by her maidens to her

chamber, than being visited by the physician of the household, he pronounced her dangerously affected by what she had undergone, and having given his directions, retired to make known to Chiverton his sister's precarious state. Descending the great staircase, which led the way from the gallery, into which the sleeping apartments opened, he was met by a domestic, who, in a confused manner, communicated his master's wish to see the physician. As the staircase terminated hard by the anti-room to the banqueting chamber, where the Knight then was, the man of medicine made his pearance instantly before Chiverton.

The apartment into which he entered, was a spacious and handsome one. Its windows occupying the entire range of one side of the quadrangle, looked, as already mentioned, into the garden, and the light, partially intercepted by the foliage without, took a still deeper tinge, as passing through the richly stained panes, it fell upon the dark wainscotting of the chamber.

This was oak, black with age, and loaded with the most elaborate carvings, in which the invention of the artist had been exerted, to produce the quaintest and most grotesque images. Some of these represented demons, some human figures, and not a few were borrowed from the characters usually personated in the sports and mummeries, then in vogue, among the lower classes of the people. An aim at the ludicrous was visible in the grouping of the figures, nor were ideas bordering upon profane scrupulously avoided, in the associations intended to be awakened by these representations. The figure of the mermaid, the symbol of the family, was lavishly displayed, not only among these carvings, but in the ornaments of the cornice, where the ambiguous sea nymph appeared, dressing the streaming locks which flowed in rich gilding around her shoulders. In execution, these representations were superior to those commonly met with at the time, and were probably the work of a German artist. The spirit of decora-

tion, so profusely displayed on the walls, had been extended to the ceiling of this apartment. Two huge beams of oak supporting it, were adorned with mouldings thickly gilt, and the spaces on either side of the timbers were painted in diamond formed compartments, and powdered with golden stars. To complete the highly ornamented appearance of the chamber, a gorgeous mantel-piece, also carved in oak, occupied nearly the entire end of the room, overhanging a hearth, whose capacious width promised a comfortable and jovial defiance to the snows and chills of winter. The furniture corresponded with the style of the apartment; stiff, ponderous, and shewy, bearing the same relation to the light manufacture of modern days, as the habitation to which it belonged might do to a Chinese cottage, a gay hunting box, that might now, perhaps, be met in the same district.

Along this chamber, the Knight of Chiverton was pacing hastily, and with irregular steps, and evidently under the dominion of violent and

conflicting passions; his naturally handsome features were distorted with rage, and his eyes burning with a strange lustre, seemed roaming in search of some one, on whom to discharge the deep and angry hatred which dwelt in them. He was not wholly alone. At the farther end of the apartment, stood a dark and swarthy Moor, whose ungainly figure was clothed in a costume, partaking in some degree of both the European and Asiatic fashions; his turban and vest of scarlet cloth, belonging to the latter, but the remainder of his dress was in the style of the other retainers of the hall. His arms were folded on his breast; his looks cast down; and from his fixed and motionless demeanor, he might have been mistaken for a statue, had it not been for an occasional glance, when, without changing the position of his head, he threw a disturbed look after Chiverton—a look, in which a triumphing hatred was so blended with an almost unearthly sneer, communicating to his unmoved features an expression of feelings un-

allied with humanity, as to startle even those who were accustomed to it, and fully to justify the suspicions which had taken root among many of the inmates of the hall, that the devil and Mahmood Bali, if not identically the same, were near relations at least. These glances were not, however, permitted to be perceptible by their object; nor did the Knight seem to be peculiarly subjected to them, for on the entrance of the physician, the same look, modified by somewhat more of human hatred, was directed towards him also. The right hand of the Moor rested on the hilt of a richly ornamented dagger, stuck in his embossed girdle. A collar of gold, beaten thin, surrounded his neck, which was bare, and showed, as did his limbs, the signs of extreme strength. His ears were laden with large drops of gold, and these completed the ornaments of his person.

As the Knight neither broke the silence, nor interrupted his disturbed progress, upon the entrance of the physician, the latter spoke.

"I was hastening hither, Sir John, when your commands met me, to communicate tidings of——"

"Of Prestwyche, or whom?" interrupted Chiverton.

"Of the Lady Ellice," replied the other.

"What of her—has she seen—has that miscreant again intruded himself upon her? And yet, why do I ask, what I know cannot have been! Would to God, that he *were* within these walls—that his insolent rashness would bring him grasp to grasp with the Chiverton; or would," contined he, stamping with ungovernable passion, "that the gulf of hell were between us, to separate us for ever;—and she—but what of her—what of Ellice?"

"The Lady Ellice," answered the physician, "is in appearance dangerously ailing, something has surely happened to disturb the customary serenity of her mind."

"Then, thou knowest not what has happened," interrupted Chiverton; "something

must have happened, sayest thou!—ha—ha—something *has* happened. I tell thee, Walter Scymel, tell thee truly, that Reginald Prestwyche hath seen her—hath spoken to her—nay, this very morning saved her life. Thou mayest look, Scymel, but it is so. Prestwyche snatched her from the river, where her horse had rushed with her; bore her to Jaggar's cave; and there, when I arrived, he came forward with her, as if expecting thanks—thanks! from me, that could laugh to see my own heart's blood flowing, if his were flowing with it. There he stood with his cool damnable insolent look, as if—By heavens, I would I could have struck him dead!"

"And what, if I may crave to ask, forbad the accomplishment of the wish?" was the physician's reply, pronounced with the coolest indifference.

"How?" returned the Knight, throwing his black glance full upon the speaker; "in the sight of all my followers, thou would'st have had me repay him for the saving of Ellice's life,

by his death? Deep as is my hatred towards him, it were beyond me to do it. And yet, thou, who hast no feud with him, can'st coolly advise his murder—nay, wonder at my lenity. By the mermaid, Walter Scymel, thou wantest but a spice more of the devil in thee, to make thee his peer. Thou wert better lecture me on my folly, for not shewing this piece of gratitude: I see thou longest to talk."

"Did I think," replied Scymel, "that the actions of men were influenced by their own weak wills and inclinations, I might with permission, point out the impolicy of suffering to escape an opportunity of removing so chief an obstacle to your plans; an opportunity which may scarcely again offer. But holding, as I do, that our resolves, and our actions, are not more our own, than the course of the dead leaf, whirled away by the wind, can be said the path of its own choosing, it were useless to argue against what was fixed. It may be the fate of Prestwyche to come into your power, and

feel its effects, on another occasion; or, for who shall tell the face of the die till it be cast—it may be, that you shall be entangled in his snares, and yield to his enmity."

"Never, Walter," interrupted the Knight, "never, by heaven, shall it be said, that the Chiverton bowed before Reginald. If, as thy accursed supposition would have it, he should be successful in the death strife between us, I might die, but not yield to him; I might brook his sword—but not his mercy.—The alternative of death, at least, thou wilt not deny, that I might embrace."

"If it were so doomed," returned the fatalist. —"But this is from the mark, Sir John—your sister's illness is dangerous—further agitation must be avoided. To see Prestwyche again, would be destruction to her, and ruin to your hopes. She labours now under delirium, and on recovering, may be persuaded to think her meeting with him, the mere vision of a disordered imagination. But then again, he must be guarded against."

" It were well, if it could be so ordered," said the Knight; " but how may he be prevented from again intruding on her presence? Whilst her distemper confines her, she is safe from him, but that removed, the opportunities for such a rencontre are many, and scarce to be guarded against. Speak man—thy wit is quick enough at times—answer me; how may this be best done?"

" Sir," answered the physician, " I need not ask you, whether you have any regard for Prestwyche, or whether——?"

The Knight fiercely interrupted him,—" regard say'st thou?—a curse on thy trifling—I tell thee, man, if there be hatred on earth, deeper than imagination can present, it is mine, for—his name stifles me.

" If such be your feelings," replied Scymel, coolly, " can an answer be necessary to you, ask Mahmood Bali—he will answer well, and quickly."

As both the speakers turned their looks towards the Moor, and as Chiverton was about

to repeat the question, Bali, without otherwise changing his posture, or varying the direction of his eyes, raised slightly the hand that grasped his dagger's hilt, until the weapon was drawn about an inch from its sheath, and relaxing his hold, suffered it to drop again into the scabbard. In doing this the metal of the hilt and the sheath struck, producing a slight noise. To the hint, so given, the lurid smile of the Moor served as a comment.

" That were indeed a mode," said Chiverton, after some pause, " perhaps, the only efficient one,—and yet, I know not why it likes me not. It suits thee well, Scymel, who hast lost, or crushed down all human feelings, or Mahmood yonder, who knows not the meaning of the phrase, and would laugh at it, were it explained to him ; it suits ye well to take the nearest ways to arrive at your ends ; but I," added he, his really fine and handsome features assuming a nobler expression than was habitual to them—" I have been born and bred a Chiverton ;—a name

unstained with dishonour, unknown to treachery; —the custom of whose possessors it has been, to slay their enemy with the sword in battle; not waylay him with the dagger, in secret ambush. Of this thou knowest, and can'st feel, nothing. But this plan I will not embrace."

"Of that, Sir," replied the physician, "you may well be a more fitting judge than Walter Scymel: howbeit, I spoke not but at your command, and according to my own weak ability. Undoubtedly, the scruples of honour have their weight, though your servants may not think them worthy to weigh down the balance, when put in competition with the loss of your worldly state and dignity."

"And wherefore should they be endangered," replied Chiverton, "by my declining to tread in the path, which thy zeal has rashly advised?"

"It were needless to remind you," returned Scymel, "that Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver is daily expected here, with your intended bride, his daughter. He will come, Sir, eager for the

match; promising himself for his daughter, splendour and opulence equal to his own, and not unwilling to ally himself with a family, so distinguished as yours. So far, Sir, it is well. But tell him, that there is a female heiress in the question, to whom the fair demesnes of Chiverton lawfully belong;—that by the whim of a grandfather, whose disposition of his property the law calls valid, though common sense laughs at them as absurd, you are entitled to not so much as a blade of grass that grows on yonder lands, so long as you have a sister, whose heirs may enjoy the estate you now call yours—tell him this, and see how cooled will be his warmth for the union;—how slight his recollection, or estimation of the honour of the family he purposes to match with."

"This might have been spared, Walter Scymel," answered the Knight; "knowing, as thou dost, that would the happiness of Ellice be increased by the knowledge of her rights, and the enjoyment of these paltry possessions, an

hour should not pass e'er she had them all. But to what, as we are now circumstanced, would it tend to do this? Only to enable her to enrich with her possessions this Prestwyche and transfer to him the having and power of a better name than his own."

"Prestwyche, Sir," said the physician, in an indifferent tone, "is of good descent, and not unequal in wealth to the Lady Ellice."

"Now, torments on thee for this," interrupted Chiverton, hastily, "think not of it, Scymel; thou torturest me man. It cannot, and shall not be—Ellice Chiverton the wife of Reginald Prestwyche!—It were well indeed;—as well, that I, who am, aye, and will be, lord of this hall, and these lands, should sink into a retainer of my generous kinsman;—to sit meekly and fawningly at the lower end of mine own board, a partaker, on sufferance, of the produce of my own lands; to doff my cap at his smile, or his frowns—to thank his generosity for my vails, and a new jerkin yearly. No—this hall

and the rock it stands on, and the lands it owns; —aye, and every breathing thing that bears the name of Chiverton, shall perish ere I endure it."

"And yet," replied Scymel, "I know not how this union may be securely prevented, save by the means which your ideas of honour,—their correctness I venture not to dispute,—prompt you to reject. Prestwyche is not one hastily to abandon a project maturely planned, the motives of which are too deeply rooted in his breast to be plucked out, as the light weed of summer heats, from the lighter soil it springs in. He has been well approved, cool in design, as daring in execution;—as unmoved by all suggestions of interest, and escape from peril, as the bare rock by the alternate sunny beams and wild blasts that meet its lofty heights. In thwarting your views, every incentive concurs to induce him to exertion. The feud between you; his interest; his passions; even what the silly world calls his virtues, urge him to your destruction. It may be—I doubt it not—that in the contest either of

policy or of force, you would be successful. But you will pardon me, Sir, for suggesting, whether with such a foe, the sure and secret is not the most advisable path. The issue of an open conflict, whatever it were, must be to you injurious, for though defeated, he might escape with life and unsilenced. I need not say that to men who know too much of others affairs, the faculty of speech is dangerous. Mahmood Bali understands well the art of making mutes, more perfectly silent than himself."

To the conclusion of this speech, uttered in a sarcastic tone, and accompanied with a corresponding look directed towards its object, the silent Moor answered with a sudden glance of deep and bitter malice; but, as before, without the least change of his position.

"I fear," said Chiverton, after a pause employed in doubtfully pacing the extensive apartment, "that it must be as thou say'st; the more so as the welfare of Ellice demands it. This Prestwyche, were he by some fiendish

agency to obtain her hand, would soon throw off the sighing lover, and put on the insolent mastery that his untameable nature pants for. Have I not myself—I, who confess it—seen and felt this—this very day, he came upon my sight, with such a confidence of demeanour, such a coolness of audacity, that for a moment I was half abashed. And what, then, would be Ellice's fate; delicate as thou knowest she is—her own happiness—her very existence, demands, that this stroller be driven from her presence, and her thoughts;—and done it shall be, whatever be the means, or the consequence."

He turned away as he ceased speaking, and walked towards one of the deep windows, with some degree of emotion; for by a delusion, not infrequent in minds of a stamp like Chiverton's, he had argued to others,—if arguing, it could by any strain of language be called,—till, for the moment, he half persuaded himself, that his motives were not devoid of some generous and amiable feeling toward one so closely allied to

him as a sister. But if he deceived himself, he did not his hearers. A sneer, most keenly intelligent, passed over the physician's features, at the weakness of the sophistry, with which the knight had endeavoured to cheat himself and his auditors. At the same time, the renewed expression of triumphing, and malicious mirth, distorted the countenance of the Moor. There was a similitude between the two, but yet with a distinction. For, while Mahmood's smile seemed that of a dæmon, gloating over, and rejoicing in the traces of human folly and wickedness, the physician seemed to contemplate what passed before him more as a matter of curiosity, as an exhibition, the progress and termination of which he was pleased to watch, not as indicative of emotions kindred to those of his own nature, but which he could study, with the same untouched indifference, as the naturalist the customs and habits of the animals he closely observes. The scarcely suppressed grimaces of hellish mirth in the Moor, were such as to raise

in the mind, had there been another to watch him, a mingled sensation of fear, horror, and disgust, less appalling, however, than the shudder, that thrilled through the very marrow, at the cold, scornful smile of Scymel.

The Knight, recovering himself from his transient emotion, again turned;—casting towards the physician that hesitating and inquiring glance, natural to a man, who finding little to rest upon, in the revolving of his own actions and wishes, weakly flies for succour to the opinions and encouragement of others. But the physician was too well read in the human heart—its darker tints at least—not clearly to discern what was passing in Chiverton's mind, and too much master of himself, to suffer his countenance to tell more than he willed. The penetrating glances of the Knight, therefore, returned, baffled from the inquisition; Scymel, meanwhile, maintaining an imperturbable silence, as one determined that Chiverton should himself speak out the agitated workings of his mind, and dissect

his own inmost feelings for the amusement of his auditors, or not obtain the healing of the advice and support he sought for. The oblique looks of Mahmood Bali shewed, from time to time, how keenly he entered into, and enjoyed, the game his companion was playing.

A bitter expression of mortified anger, shewn only in looks, though seemingly on the point of breaking out into more violent expressions of his feelings, seemed to tell that the Knight was not blind to the temper of his counsellor. But the mind, laid open to the attacks of passion, is so easily, and absolutely, under the dominion of a cooler, and self-possessing spirit, that Chiverton seemed almost in fear of his subtle retainer, and rarely ventured openly to indulge the anger, so natural to his own impetuous disposition, and which the physician's observations so frequently excited. Finding, therefore, that it was necessary to commence the conference, if he wished to avail himself of Scymel's counsel, he again enquired what course was to be followed, to guard

against the consequences, which the unexpected re-appearance of Prestwyche induced him to apprehend.

" Sir John," returned the physician, " I have already ventured to point at the only mode, which my hasty judgment is able to devise, by which Prestwyche may be prevented from thwarting your designs. That he may disclose to the father of the lady, whom you intend to make your bride, circumstances, most necessary to be concealed from him, and which St. Maurice alone can communicate, is too probable to require observation. Perhaps, by deeper consideration, a plan milder than the one proposed, and at the same time equally efficient, might be devised. But if, which appears not unlikely, the mischief were done, e'er the plan be matured, the pleasure of contemplating so ingenious a design, might possibly, hardly outweigh the inconvenience of parting with the honours and possessions of Chiverton."

As if eager to escape from the doubts and

indecision of his own mind, the Knight hastily answered,

" Well, have it as thou wilt; kill, slay, murder—I care not what—manage all—direct all, only rid me of this accursed enemy, and—thou hast not found me ungrateful."

An inclination of the head spoke the physician's answer to the concluding words of Chiverton.

" And," continued the Knight, " thou said'st, I bethink me, that Ellice was ailing. Beware that thou drive away her illness;—I would not, for all these fair domains, have ought of evil bechance a hair of her head. I will now go visit her. But, Scymel," lingering as he departed, and drawing the physician nearer to him, " this Prestwyche? thou wilt be mindful;—thou knowest Mahmood Bali has a dagger."

" He has not worn it in vain;—it shall hardly slumber now," answered Scymel, and satisfied by this assurance the Knight withdrew.

The physician approached the Moor: " Most enchanting pagan, of what are thy meditations?

But why do I ask? Thou thinkest, Mahmood Bali, of the feast thou shalt prepare;—of the blood, in which thy sooty hands shall change their dye. But see thou dost thy task well, my Saracen; the point of thy dagger, or the ball of an arquebuss, well directed, needs not iteration. Well, well, man, thou may'st spare thy looks: —I question not thy skill, an I did, I might chance to know it; to find conviction; thou art rarely wanting in practical illustrations of thy most pleasing theory. Why, thou rejoicest in the bare idea, thine eyes glisten, and thy hand grasps the hilt of that pretty weapon, as naturally as the blade fits the scabbard. But think not of it, Mahmood;—cunning as thou art in conception, deadly in purpose and execution—devil as thou art in all, think not thyself a match for Walter Scymel:—I know thee well; know, that thou hatest me as thou hatest all mankind, though that, in sooth, is the sole quality for which I hate thee not—yet much as I admire thy temper and skill; that fine malignity, with

which thou triumphest over the follies and sufferings of the foolish ones of the earth, give me reason to suspect, that thou aimest ought against me, then look to thyself, for one instant:—thou wilt not need to concern thyself, whilst a second shall elapse."

If the eyes of the Moor had before merited the epithet which his companion applied to them, of *gleaming*, they now resembled perfect fires, as they glowed with fury at the physician's defiance, which, pronounced with the coolness and levity of immeasurable superiority, incensed Mahmood to a state of almost phrenzy. His teeth chattered with rage, and the blood forced itself into his face, with such violence, that the red glow might be seen through his dark skin, like the dull hue of a ruddy flame, half seen through a dense and sable cloud of smoke; whilst his features, not naturally unpleasing, or irregular, were distorted, almost too hideously to be deemed human; an impression easily strengthened by the strange and continuous

gibbering of passion, that burst from his throat, as he seemed vainly endeavouring to vent his fury in speech; a faculty, of which either nature or some artificial means, had apparently deprived him. He retained still his unmoved posture, and neither the violent workings of his countenance, nor the appalling and unearthly noise which they were accompanied with, produced the slightest effect upon the physician, unless it were to increase the laughing and scornful smile, with which he continued to behold the Moor.

"Well, man, be quiet," he at last said, "why, I did but jest, and it were prudent in thee, to reserve thy rage for the terror or amusement of some one, who is less familiar with thy engaging moods, than I,—to me they have lost their novelty, and I need not tell thee, that bugbears are somewhat indifferent to me. But what thinkest thou of the day's work?—a subject thou seest is provided whereon to experiment

thy curious skill in the art in which thou delightest. Prestwyche is a morsel of thy liking; brave, noble, and handsome, are qualities which will insure him thy best aid in making a speedy transit from this turbulent world."

At this address, the features of Mahmood, subsiding from their stormy expression of rage, into a smile, in which a malicious anticipation was blended with an unearthly rejoicing, raised as before his dagger from his sheath, and after once letting it drop, again elevated it, holding it, as if waiting for a signal of repetition. The physician understood him.

"Why, thou insatiate dog of Mahound," said he, "cannot one victim suffice thee, for this turn, but, ere he is secured, thou pantest for another? Did I not laugh to scorn, the fables that priestly cunning and womanish fear have given birth to, I would believe, that in thee, I saw the identical Sathan, of whose amiable qualities thine own are so close a counter-

part. But how now?—as I live, thy countenance is marked with a pious horror at my prophanity, and thou marvellest I warrant, why, Mahound strikes not to death the unhallowed blasphemer; what, *thou* dreamest of the joys of paradise, and the youthful Houris whose charms shall delight thee and all true believers? Oh, truly, thou raisest my laughter, to think what need of lodging superstition must have, when she is fain to seek an habitation in such a tenement as thee. But, thou longest to strike twice; who is the next to whom thou wouldst vouchsafe the favour of a speedy deliverance?"

The Moor looked cautiously around; smiled his grim smile, and striking down his dagger firmly into its sheath, ejaculated his deep and horrible laugh, fixing his glance at the same time upon the physician, with a doubtful and searching expression. A momentary pause ensued before Scymel spoke.

"I understand," said he then—"but it must

not be." He then turned away, and seemed lost in reflection.

"No," said he, speaking aloud, although addressing himself, rather than his companion, "young, beautiful, and amiable, and wise beyond her years, even I—who have known and suffered by the blind follies of mankind, until convinced, that we are but the tools of fate, and as such, no more responsible, than the stone kicked by the foot, for the mischief its course may occasion; even I cannot, will not be a sharer in the destruction of such a creature. And this the rather, because I may not forget, there was a time when the bright chimera of virtue, and the delusions of the affections, were to me as things of truth and reality; when not yet awakened from the dream of happy ignorance into the misery of understanding, Walter Scymel had, like an enthusiast, dreamed of woman's love, and man's friendship—bubbles both, and broken like their fellows of the stream —as sparkling, as hollow, and as chill. But what

forbids that I should pay a tribute to the remembrance of my youthful hopes? Such a tribute shall be the life I will save, the care with which I will watch over the only one, that, if any could, might make me doubt my creed of unbelief—even in contradiction to those principles, whereby, unmoved by trifling and nominal distinctions, I love to shape my unhesitating course."

Such were the muttered musings that bespoke the wreck of a mind, naturally fitted for lofty and humane aspirations, but impelled by unhappy and inexplicable circumstances, aided by a dangerous love of independence, imprudently indulged into a cold and settled adherence to doctrines, alike destructive to the wretched possessor, and those with whom he came in contact. Thus it was, that the very excellence of natural disposition, conduced only to render more complete the chill, that striking to the heart, had made it a prey to scornful and unhesitating wickedness, as the iron, most fiercely

glowing, becomes when suddenly quenched, most brittle and impenetrable.

Recovering himself from his abstracted remarks, he addressed the Moor, who had watched with unsuppressed scorn the workings of the physician's mind.

"What, thou! in faith, I had well nigh forgot that thou wert here, or I had hardly given so wide a scope to the weakness of a minute, that few have seen in Walter Scymel. But I heed it not, thou art no tale bearer, and I let thee laugh the easier, because I know thou fearest me. But away—he dies at least, and yet, perchance she loves him—and what then, or of what regard is the silly liking of a love-sick girl, that if indulged, would draw down ruin on them both? I trifle—speed—dispatch then—thou art not slow to such an errand; but see that thou be cautious—what thou doest, do in secret. Begone," adding as the Moor left the apartment, "sure I am less than what I was, that the thought of lovers day dreams

should stay but for a second, my orders, my resolves. For shame, Walter, what not yet resolute?"

With these words, he followed the direction that Mahmood had taken.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD KNIGHT.

"A tall Gentleman by Heaven."
SECOND PART HEN. IV.

THE reader already knows, that the ordinary passage over the river, was by means of a ferry-boat, stationed for the convenience of the inhabitants of the hall on that side of the river, on which the mansion was situated. A few minutes only had elapsed, since the conversation detailed in our last chapter, when the pilot of this little vessel was seen preparing for his accustomed voyage. The person by whom his services were put in

requisition, was clad in a dark suit, carrying with him what bore a strong resemblance to an arquebuss. Was he a sportsman? it was like enough; but an inmate of the Hall would have had no difficulty in answering in the negative; when, as the boat gained the other side of the stream, the voyager in leaping to the bank, displayed the powerful frame of the Moor.

He bent his way towards the cave, near which it will be remembered, we left Prestwyche, after delivering to her brother's followers the rescued Ellice, and to whose subsequent progress, we will, for a time revert. When the last glimpse of her he loved had faded from his eyes, he turned his steps, and proceeding to a rude habitation at the distance of about half a mile, called to the inmates for his horse. A beautiful Spanish jennet, whose proud curvetings as the man brought him forth, and ready submission to his master's hand, shewed his noble nature, and perfect training, was speedily led out of a half cultivated inclosure, roughly fenced off from the

surrounding grounds. Rewarding this rude groom for his services, Prestwyche mounted his steed, and quickly lost sight of the hall and its surrounding scenery.

Having removed himself from the immediate vicinity of a spot, which he believed with reason, was for him scarcely a place of safety, he slackened his speed, and abandoning himself to the meditation of the subjects that crowded upon his mind, proceeded at the easy rate favourable to mental revisings.

His reflections were of a mingled nature,—the pleasant with the painful; but the former far predominating. In rescuing from the waves a fellow creature, he had recovered a mistress, fondly loved, and believed to be lost for ever—he found her still unchanged; his heart told him, that Ellice was still as much his own as when they parted; compelled by circumstances to visit foreign countries, he had been detained there by the arts of Chiverton, between whom and himself, a casual and unexplained quarrel

had bred, on the part of the former, invincible and deadly hatred; persuaded by false reports, that the object of his affections was no more, all that remained for him was to visit the tomb, where his most cherished feelings lay buried with her from whom they took their birth.

With that intent he had visited the neighbourhood of Chiverton Hall, and had been now requited by clasping to his heart the living form, whose shade his spirit had invoked to look upon him from the world beyond the tomb; their eyes had met; their hands had exchanged the mutual pressure, that told to each how dear was this unexpected meeting; and the accents of affection had fallen on his ear, from lips whose sweetness gave to every word a charm of more than music.

Lost in the soothing delirium in which such contemplations speedily enwrap the soul, Prestwyche traversed, almost regardless of its charms, the beautiful tract of country through which his route lay. In place of the dusty

turnpike road, now occupying nearly the same ground the traveller rode along, was a broad path of close green turf, interrupted by occasional stumps of trees, hewed down to lay open the way, which winding through a thickly wooded district, and guarded on either side, by continuous masses of luxuriant foliage, lay shrouded in a sombre, but not unpleasing gloom, except when, at a later hour, the beams of the evening sun threw their mellow radiance down the long vistas, which stretching westerly, were but little visited by the garish beams of the earlier part of the day.

There was something in this secluded aspect, gratifying to a mind fond of retiring into itself, and the rider, whilst indulging his day dreams, could not but feel a quiet pleasure in the circumscribed scene around him. Lordly trees, individuals among the hosts that flourishing there, grew old, undisturbed but by the casual tempest, cast their enormous and twisted branches over the avenue, until meeting in a

natural archway, they half intercepted the dim light that illuminated the path. Broad oaks, of antique growth, were gathered in clumps, and interspersedly, sycamores spread their lighter foliage, and ranges of beech reared aloft their silvery stems. Tall pine, and dusky evergreen, deepening the wildness of vegetation, lent in their summits a habitation for tribes of clamorous rooks. At intervals the sad wild cry of the woodpecker pierced the ear, whilst from the bushes swelled the more delightful music of the linnet and thrush; mingled with the strains of countless birds, pouring on the still air the exquisite thrillings of native melody.

Where the scene, less confined, opened into occasional glades, thronged with wild plants, and unrestrained herbage, every thing conspired to heighten the idea of a solitary and unfrequented region. The rabbit, and the hare, the minor rangers of the earth, skipped carelessly before, and almost under the horse's feet. Scattered herds of cattle idly raised their heads to

mark the intruder on their domains, and returned to browse upon the luscious vegetation. Here and there the less dense trunks shewed at a distance herds of deer, stepping with dainty majesty, on their slim and taper limbs, over rich and expanding meads, tossing proudly aloft their antlered brows, and bounding lightly over rivulet and hillock that occurred in their course. Here, too, wild flowers and shrubs, diversified the surface of the ground; cherished by clear brooks, rippling over their shallow beds, or foaming with mimic fury, as the straggling roots of plants, or other incidental interruptions, impeded their progress.

The character of the scenery harmonized well with the dreamy mood of the traveller, who proceeded almost unconsciously, enjoying the beauties with which he was surrounded, uninterrupted by any chance wayfarer on the same road. Once, a noise, indeed, a rustling, seemingly not distant, among the bushes, as of some one cautiously making way through them,

caused him to turn his looks in the direction from which the sounds proceeded;—but, as often as he listened, the silence was broken only by the song of the birds, the gurgling of the brooks, and the whispering tremor of the leaves, as they quivered in the low wind. He, therefore, ceased to take notice of what he could not but deem an illusion of fancy, and proceeded on his way.

Prestwyche had thus pursued his way some time, when, not lamenting the near approach of his journey's end, he arrived at a spot in which the darker characteristics of the scene assumed a still deeper character; the road here became narrower, scarce allowing space for more than one horseman to pass without difficulty, and the ground, broken and uneven, called for all the skill of the rider to make good his way without accident. The privation of light was here almost complete, for though a narrow defile among the trees on the left, seemed to open as a passage

into the woods, the eye strained up in vain to catch a glimpse of the excluded day beams.

No sooner had Prestwyche proceeded so far as to bring his person in a line with the direction of the opening, than a sudden blaze darting through the gloom, dazzled his horse's eyes. The animal started, and in so doing, struck his rider with violence against the blighted arm of an oak, and stumbling in the obscurity, amid the broken ground, came down at the moment that the flash of an arquebuss shed its red light down the defile, and the well directed ball, whizzing over the head of Prestwyche as he fell, lodged itself deep in the trunk of the tree. When the screams of the affrighted birds, and the flapping of their wings, as they rose skimming aloft, had at length subsided, the silence seemed deeper than before.

Stunned by the blow, which had at first deprived him of his command over his steed, and bruised by his fall, Prestwyche lay for a time

motionless and insensible. He was aroused from the trance by which he was possessed, by the sensation of a gentle motion, seemingly caused by the efforts of some one to raise him.

"Where am I, and with whom?" asked he, recovering the power of speech.

"He is safe—he speaks," answered a mild voice, and continued, "thou art in good hands, my son, but I fear art sorely bruised with thy fall: speak, how art thou?"

"I know not of what you speak," answered Prestwyche, "but explain, I——"

"Be still awhile, and you shall know all—all that is, which we can tell you; but in the mean time be obedient, and talk not; thou wilt harm thyself else. And now, Jennings, help me to place this youth upon his horse."

The kind and gentle manner in which the unknown spoke, assured Prestwyche that he was, as had been said, in good hands; he submitted, therefore, quietly to the directions of his chance friend, and with the assistance ren-

dered him, regained his seat. The stranger and his attendant supported him at either side, and they proceeded at a moderate rate. The road expanded, the imminent branches became less closely connected, and an increased quantity of light, shewed the travellers the smooth easy green-sward over which they rode.

The light refreshing breeze that played among the leaves, came a seasonable relief to Prestwyche, who was not long in recovering some, though an imperfect recollection, of what had passed. His hurts were trifling, but his head still felt stunned by the blows he had received. Fortunately they were not far from the village, which had been his place of destination, and the spire of the wood-immured church was hailed as a friendly welcome.

They arrived at the door of the village inn, a small tenement, but whose spacious porch was far from unattractive, while the anticipations conveyed by glimpses of an orchard, a poultry-yard, and a cow-house, were to a tra-

velling imagination, things of great and joyous invitation.

At the door of the hospitium, stood ready to receive his guests, the rotund host of the Bell and Beetle; a mellow man, whose cares had left no scores upon his sleek countenance, and whose thoughts seemed divided between his guests, his daughter, and the goodly tankard that adorned his sinister hand.

This vessel had just swung up to the summit of the arc it was wont to describe, when the approach of Prestwyche and his companions arrested mine host's eye and hand. Dropping the tankard to the situation which might be called its aphelion, he wiped from his lips the foam of the double stout, from which he had been so abruptly doomed to sever, and waddling forward some steps, gave his salutation to the travellers.

"A good day is this, your Reverence, that sees your mule amble twice to the door of the Bell and Beetle; and another in company, and—

but by bonny Bowden bells,—how now, my morning's guest, and in this plight! An I would not rather my tankard were empty for a day—and that would go near to parch my whistle, than have seen this sight."

"My good host," interrupted the priest, for such was Prestwyche's companion, "I doubt not your concern for the misfortunes of a brother; the more as I gather from your speech, that you have but lately called him guest. Nevertheless, let us not waste time in words that profit little, but assist this youth to dismount, an exertion which, I fear, he is little able to accomplish unaided."

"As your worship pipes, so will I dance," answered the good-natured publican, "and that before I touch my tankard—so, ho, cheerily now, there, so we have reached terra firma. Plague on the cause of this unlucky accident. But forward, Sir Knight, and forward Sir Priest, and if I show you not to as nice a room, and as clean and as snug as any within two counties,—

aye, and as good a cup of canary sack to boot, why may my tankard be empty for a day."

"A truce," said the priest, "to sack and canary; rest, and not drink, is what is wanted. A bed if one be ready."

"And that," said the host, "I'll warrant for —Ellen—clean sheets—why, daughter—scented with sprigs of lavender. How now, girl, I say —see that the green-room be in order instanter, my child, that is without delay, and, hear me, girl, send me my tankard. I left it, I bethink me, in the porch—'tis a sore thing that parts us —via—speed for thy life. But I will myself see that things be done well."

"Do so, and speedily," replied the priest; and then addressing himself to St. Maurice, he inquired with great kindness how he felt.

"I feel little," was the reply, "save a weariness of the whole person, and it seems to me that my head is giddy, and my memory tells me but imperfectly of what has happened lately;

but I would fain know to whom I am so deeply indebted—since but for your care—my——"

"Repay this mighty obligation, then, by observing my directions. I will for the present, minister as your bodily physician, and my first direction," he continued, smiling, "is that you ask no questions, and converse with no one. All that you wish to know, shall be told in due time."

The jolly landlord at this moment came in, informing them that his accommodations were ready. "And if your worship," added he, as he conducted Prestwyche to his chamber, "ever slept on a softer bed, or between whiter hollands, may my tankard be empty for a day."

The priest remained below. The room in which he sat, an apartment appropriated by the host to guests for whom he felt, or professed, a peculiar reverence, was small, but neat, and commanded from its latticed casement a delightful view. The clergyman gazed upon it, but

his mind was loaded with oppressive thoughts, and he turned away, incapable of enjoying the beauties that lay before him. The place in which he was, favoured the sorrowful impress of his meditations. The dark pannels of wainscotting, cut from the mountain larch, diffused a gloom over the apartment, but partially dispelled by the rays of the declining sun, whose deepened lustre sank through the leafy curtained lattice. He sat down, and for a time was ingrossed in uninterrupted reverie.

"I know not," thought he, "what may be the upshot of this meeting. Reginald Prestwyche alive, and seemingly on his return from the hall. What may not be—what may not already have been the event—that Ellice loved him, I well believe—that her brother hates him, I know—alas! that the red hand of strife should sever those whom nature, whom affection has joined—for Ellice is bound to her brother, as closely by affection, as by birth, and to retain the lover and the brother, were I fear impossible

—it is, it is—human hatred, never rose to a more deadly height, than that of Chiverton to Prestwyche—Why—why, is it ever permitted, that the best and holiest passions of the heart, should conduce, to place a sting in the bosom that fosters them? Why—but shame on thee, Richard Wayword, that darest to dispute even in a thought the fitness of which is ordained; wherefore, when goodness and mercy is made manifest in the ninety and nine, shouldst thou repine if the hundredth working, for wise purposes, is hid from mortal understanding—vices, and passions, and hopes, I have thrown aside; but cannot yet subdue the pride of carnal reason that vexes me within—yet, will I struggle with the tempter—I will pray to be delivered from the snare of the weak heart." The good man bowed in silent devotion,—when is the prayer of the lowly spirit rejected?

He arose with a more tranquil mind, and approaching the open casement, rejoiced in the cool fragrance of the breeze, as it blew into the

apartment laden with the scent of a thousand flowers. How did his heart, purified from the grossness of the worse affections of humanity, expand over the picture of beauty, that lay in lovely perspective within his sight.

At the distance of about a hundred yards behind the inn, the rich pasture land declined gently to meet a lake, whose waters lay, a broad pure sheet, scarcely stirred by the undulation of a single ripple; while faithfully returning every surrounding object, the natural beauty of the scenery lived again in the stillness of its reflection. The dwellings that stood near were few and small; the ornaments of nature rich and many. A mingled diversity of wood and plain lay beyond its banks; luxuriant vegetation fringed its margin, save where the retiring waters had left a narrow ridge of sand, or bed of shining pebbles. Scattered flocks browsed on the herbage, or indolently reposing, basked in the broad sunbeams, attended by some careless shepherd, who lying as idle as his sheep, and con-

fiding to his rough coated dog the trouble of his charge, contented himself with the nominal superintendence of the whole; sleeping away one half his hours in some hedge bottom, where the daisied bank afforded an easy pillow, or angling in the lake for the fish, that inhabited its waters in shoals.

Such was the general character of the spot; but the beauties in which its attractions, more especially consisted were, where the occasional sinuosities of the little sea advanced, or receded into diminutive capes or bays; on the former of which fishing huts had been here and there erected, whilst the latter, shaded by dark underwoods, and groves of the hollyoak, slept buried in a profound gloom, that giving play to the fancy, took by their obscurities in the eye of an imaginative beholder, a double interest. On the extreme bank stood a church, shrouded by trees, and visible only by its antique tower, surmounted by a small spire. Dark woods formed the back ground of the picture, and

opening from time to time, into long and dusky avenues, shewed expanded afar off, the sweeping plains of the adjoining county, bounded by hills, scarcely distinguishable in the distance from the clouds, in which their summits were enveloped. The rich tinge of the declining day hung over all, and added the last finish to the scene.

As the priest gazed with pleasure, arising equally from the objects before him, and the renovated placidity of his own mind, (for the charm of nature's beauty is not wholly from without,) he suddenly perceived, at the extremity of one of those openings that interrupted the continuity of the clustered woods, what seemed a dark mass, apparently in rapid motion. As it continued to advance, its appearance became more dispersed, and it was not long ere the priest could discern the individual forms of a group of travellers.

"Sir Gamelyn Vancouver, as we expected, doubtless," said he, "with his daughter, the

destined bride of Chiverton, and their retinue. It may not be well that this youth should tarry here: should he be revived enough to travel in the morning, I will advise him that he depart; yet hardly with a hope of his acquiescence, unless it be to rush into situations of further peril."

The group had now reached the brink of the lake, and one or two of the fishing vessels were speedily prepared to waft them across its surface; a conveyance adopted in order to escape the circuitous route along the margin of the water. The first boat containing Sir Gamelyn, his daughter, and two female attendants of the lady, was put off, and shot across the mere, drawing in its wake a long luminous train, as the reddening sunbeams glittered on the awakened ripple. A second followed, fraught with the remainder of the company, and the horses were dispatched under the convoy of two servants by the land paths, the light vessels not being calculated for such a charge.

A slight knock at the door of the apartment, interrupted the clergyman's observations. "Come in," said he, and the tankard of mine host, followed by the sleek owner, entered the room.

"Your Reverence will pardon me—I but thought your Reverence would like to know they—that is, I suppose, Sir Gamelyn and his people are crossing the lake, in one of Fydian Fletcher's fishing wherries. Could I but have foreknown the same, my son-in-law's tidy smack —your Reverence knows it's a light, lively creature, that he won at the last water quintain twelve months agone—aye, twelve months come Shrove-tide—should have been ready instanter; but I see your Reverence has been before hand with me, and seen all. Well, a-day, I was in the garden, when Jack Linloss comes up, 'Host,' says he, 'yon's a power of gentlefolk crossing the mere.' 'Crossing,' says I, 'but how crossing?' 'Why in Fydian's boats, from one side to t'other.' 'Then

by Bowden bells,' said I, 'now Jack;—but he was off, your Reverence, and I waddles here as fast as my tankard would let me—but as sure as Bowden bells, I think I grow fatter and fatter, and slower and slower every day, your Reverence. Your Reverence will pardon my joking—your Reverence is a kindly minded man."

"Your tankard is your enemy, host—abandon that, and your frame will be healthier—your joints more supple."

"My tankard, says your Reverence? he is my best friend—morning and night, early and late, holiday and work-day, he's all alike, your Reverence, true as a clock, never forsakes me, and——but I hear the horses in the yard, and me not there to welcome the comers. May my tankard be empty for a day—but——"

He hastened without completing his sentence, to perform the duties of his vocation, an important branch of which, in his eyes, consisted in the due reception of the guests on their arri-

val—it was the office, in the execution of which he chiefly prided himself, and was, he said, giving them a foretaste of the land of promise.

The extraordinary noise and bustle which took place in all quarters of the house; the slamming of doors; the loud and obsequious salutations of the landlord, and the shrill tones of the females, as the pretty Ellen gave her directions to the red-armed, puff-cheeked chamber maid, sufficiently indicated the arrival of guests of more than ordinary importance. But the clamour gradually died away, for as the arrival of Sir Gamelyn had been expected, the arrangements of the host and his daughter had been providently completed, and the admiring conversation of the maiden of the inn, with the plump domestic, was alone heard, as she recapitulated, with circumstantial wonderment, the articles of dress with which Sir Gamelyn's daughter was attired, and discussed by turns her embroidered riding habit, her gay jet palfrey, and the smiles and words of their beautiful owner.

It was not long before the door of the priest's

apartment opening, the host's full moon face once more made its appearance. He came to announce to Wayword, that Sir Gamelyn wished to partake of his company and converse.

"I will wait on him forthwith," was the reply, and the clergyman was about to make good his words, when his egress was stayed by the appearance of the inviter himself.

"Nay, nay, by'r Lady, not so, not so, good Master Wayword," exclaimed this last comer, seizing hold at the same time on the priest's hand, with a force of good fellowship that benumbed every finger, "black gown before buff jerkin, all the world over. What, man, I have been a soldier in my time; but never forgot my reverence to mother church. And how's Sir John, and pretty Mistress Ellice, his sister. Sword blades and bucklers; but this is a snug den, too: somewhat chilly, as a man may say, seeing that the day's dropping—knowest thou ought to cure that same, bully host?"

"An I might presume——"

" Sword blades and bucklers! but I tell thee thou shalt not presume, but thou shalt do better, man—fetch me hither a pottle of sack, and a toast—and—but what's thy name?"

" Jothan Jenkinson, your Worship—son of Jerubbäal Jenkinson of Bowden downs—my father, praise God, was——"

" Doth thy father make sack?"

" Ah, your Worship is pleased to be facetious; my father has been dead this four year good."

" Then, what have we to do with him;—one subject at a time:—a pottle of sack, well brewed, is matter enough for a man's brain—so begone Jothan, and brew, Jenkinson,—sack I say, with eggs, Son of Jerubbäal and without time—or swords and bucklers, Bowden steeple shall not save thee."

" An I make not the sack to your liking, may my tankard be 'empty for a day," said the obedient host, taking up his companion, which, out of respect for his guests, he had set down

on entering the room—and ere he had well closed the door, a hard fetching of breath was heard, concluding the moderate draught, with which the son of Jerubbäal deemed fit to commence the business in hand."

The liquor bespoken by the Knight, a beverage now obsolete, being produced and approved by a sounding smack of the lips, and, "the Canary is well." Sir Gamelyn reclined himself, in the easy posture of a man, who determines upon an hour's freedom from all care and exertion:—a bright fire, sparkling in the chimney, enlivened the gloom that began to steal over the room, and cast its flickering glare strong and gaily on the wainscot:—the countenance of the Knight expanded joyously, as he contemplated the crackling embers. He stretched his legs still more luxuriously to the hearth, rubbed his hands with energy, and was nigh ready to burst into open laughter out of sheer pleasure.

He was himself a pleasurable object to behold; time alone, seemed to have silvered his

hair, and given wrinkles to his brow, and withered his cheeks, which still retained a faded tinge of the bloom of their youth. For care, or aught of sadness, had made a point to come not near him, or at least not to hang up their ensigns in his countenance. Mirth was on his lips, and his long blue eyes twinkled and laughed so eternally; the whole so tempered too, with the benevolence that beamed from his features, that the heart was taken by storm: it was impossible not to love him.

"And now," said he, "it will be no harm, not even to a man of your calling, Reverend Master Wayword, to pledge a health to the noble Knight of Chiverton, and his fair sister, of whom I have heard that in qualities becoming damsels of good condition, she is equalled by few."

"Accept, worthy Sir, of their thanks by me their servant. Of Sir John Chiverton I may say, that he has valour, which, at times, we of a peaceful vocation would deem bordering upon

rashness;—that he has generosity fitted to his station, and that I may, (although unskilled in such pursuits) report him well gifted with a soldier's acquirements. The Lady Ellice hath indeed few equals—I say not, in the trifling phrase of vain and idle talkers, that she is an angel on earth, but surely the sister of Chiverton is the perfection of woman."

"I would fain believe your praises," replied Sir Gamelyn, "did your actions keep pace with your words—yet, an you deemed as highly of those with whom you sojourn, as your speech would import, I guess that this flagon, foaming with as good Canary as ever danced green wave on English oak, would, of a verity, not stand a begging at your elbow with the pledge I offered."

"Be not offended, worthy Sir," answered the other—"that I crave to decline your invitation. It suiteth ill for one who wears my habit, to indulge in ought, though innocent in itself, that may cause him to swerve from those accustomed rules that help him to subdue the weak-

ness of his nature. It is rarely that wine wets these lips. The Knight under whose roof I dwell humours me in this—shall I not expect the same indulgence from one, whom I may even now call his kinsman; whose favourable thoughts I would willingly merit?"

"By'r Lady—Sir priest, you speak well in favour of an indifferent cause. But swords and bucklers, I never baulk my own humour for any man's yea or nay, and so I wish not to meddle with another's notions. And yet, that good sack—I will myself vouch its excellence—should go a wooing in vain—'tis strange enough—'faith to a lad that has seen service, and never saw a glass of liquor—from sparkling Rhenish down to a cup of English ale, but what there were two drinkers for one asker;—but as I said, I quarrel with no man's taste."

He interrupted himself by renewing his attacks upon the capacious vessel, whose contents he had in vain recommended to his companion. He placed the flagon, as he concluded his

draught, near the clergyman, with a look that seemed half to express an expectation—a hope that Wayword would recant. But a good humoured smile, and gentle movement of the head from the latter, expressed at once his conception of the purport of the gesture, and his refusal of the offer conveyed by it.

"Ah well," said the old Knight, "methinks I feel a good twenty years taken off my shoulders, at the thought of seeing my Isabel the wife of such a man, and the sister of such a lady, as you describe your Sir John and the Lady Ellice, Master Wayword. But swords and bucklers man, you have not seen her yet—that's ill—what did I think of—here, host, I say—but no—I will myself fetch her to you, and——"

"Were it not better, Sir Gamelyn," interrupted the clergyman, to defer this until morning. "It may be, that the Lady Isabel is fatigued with her journey, and would more willingly retire to rest, than be brought into the presence of a stranger at this time. Besides,

Sir, ladies are chary of their appearance, and do not willingly exhibit themselves, even to those whose opinion they least value, when travel or other cause has discomposed the head attire, or soiled the dress, or flushed the cheek."

"Why, God-a-mercy man," exclaimed the Knight, "one would think to hear ye, ye were a limber legged springald, of some two and twenty summers—some hero of galliards and spavins—to think of you, Mr. Wayword, talking gravely of such girlish whim whams!—but be quiet, man, and let me fetch her." He left the room accordingly.

From the time that elapsed before his return, it seemed that Wayword had not falsely anticipated the lady's objections to an introduction at such a time. At length Sir Gamelyn returned, leading in his hand his beautiful and blushing daughter.

Indeed she was beautiful:—she had the winning beauty that looks and smiles itself into the heart, before the critic judgment can scan

the lineaments, which fancy invests with even more than their native loveliness. The light laughing graces of seventeen—she was budding into womanhood, yet could scarcely be more than seventeen—played around her form and countenance. Her ringlets, of a glossy brown—her blue eyes and pouting lips, all shared in the charm which youth and happiness wove around her, like the hues of a fairy dream;—the buoyancy of every motion—the elasticity of every step, spoke the mental and bodily health of the rejoicing girl.

She bent her knee with grace, as she bowed to receive the good priest's blessing—he gazed upon her with affectionate kindness.

"You put trust indeed in Sir John Chiverton," said he to the Knight, "when you confide to him the custody of such a jewel as this; your only daughter, too, Sir Gamelyn."

"One's enough—one's enough," returned the merry Knight, "unless the sort were better;—and yet, Wayword, if you will trust a father's

word, Isabel is a good girl—I shall lack my daughter—she is in truth, the treasure of my age." His eye glistened as he spake—" my heart will be heavier when thou art gone, wench —'twill be the first time thou ever mad'st it heavy."

" Blessed is the child," said the priest, " of whom it can so be said—blessed and honoured the parent who can so speak. You, Lady, will not fail to remember how much more than the beauty which perishes, a parent's praise makes lovely. The Lord of Chiverton may rejoice:— the dutiful daughter must be the obedient, the loving wife—remember though you leave a father's presence, his thoughts will follow you —his hopes, his wishes: you are—and if I err not much—deserve to be his best treasure, and where the treasure is, there will the heart be also:—in the fulfilment of your new duties, you will approve yourself worthy the affection of a parent's heart."

" Oh, Sir," replied the maiden, half weeping,

in the midst of her smiling mood, "you know not half my father; his goodness is blind to the faults of his child—never shall I know kindness equal to his—if I could tell you half his love to me—I could love myself, for having been thought worthy of it."

"Aye, aye," exclaimed the Knight, "you women are all of the same tree. Love enough for old faces till new ones put them out of mind. Let a month go, and Dame Chiverton will be too fond and loving to her husband, to remember a quarter of the duty and affection of Isabel Vancouver to her father."

"Nay, dearest father, now you are unjust to your—fie on the word, did I say *unjust?*—but are you not too hard upon your daughter! Think not, Sir, that your child can ever, or for any one, forget the love, the duty she owes to the best of parents."

"And I, too, will venture," said Wayword, "to speak, since better advocate may not be had at hand, in defence of the sex, to whom, Sir

Gamelyn, you do scant justice. Are women always the changeable beings you would represent them? In sickness, where is the endurance that equals the patient constancy she shews?—what hand so tenderly administers the draught, and binds the wound? In prosperity, her hopes are unclouded, and her way wet with no tears, she is gay and lightsome; it may be capricious. But let sorrow and calamity draw forth the stronger points of her nature, and arouse those exertions, of which woman, and woman alone, is capable, and in anxious watchfulness, in soothing tenderness, in persevering suffering for those with whom her affections have linked her, and all these heightened and multiplied in value, by the extinguishment of every selfish thought; where shall we find her excelled, or where indeed equalled?"

"Now God-a-mercy," interrupted the Knight, "an you are both set against me, I had best run for it—Why, Master Wayword——"

His speech was cut short by a renewed

knocking at the door of the apartment, and the subsequent entry of the host, who apologized after his fashion for the intrusion, and addressing the priest in a low tone, informed him, that his patient had made frequent inquiries after him, and was desirous of seeing his benefactor. The clergyman arose.

" I must, for a while, crave your excuse, Sir Gamelyn, and yours, fair lady; a trifling duty will a while deprive me of your society. You will pardon the abruptness of my departure."

The knight was vociferous in his protestations against Wayword's departure; his daughter, too, joined her gentler entreaties. The priest, however, excused himself, and followed the landlord to the chamber in which Prestwyche had been placed.

On entering the apartment, he found his patient loosely dressed, and pacing the room with some impatience. The youth approached him hastily as he entered—

" My memory," said he, " surely played me

a treacherous trick, when I remembered not the worthy Master Wayword. And yet, it seemed to me that some recollection was in my mind, of the benevolent countenance of the friend to whom I am so much indebted. Allow me to say, friend, if not on my own account, yet for the sake of one with whom you are connected—one to whom you have often spoken the words of consolation and kindness, and in whose fate, he who speaks to you is more interested than in ought that concerns himself. Accept of my thanks for your goodness to both."

"You have little to thank me for," returned the priest, "the service I was fortunately enabled to render you, was so trifling, and the Lady Ellice, I wit it is of her you speak, repays abundantly by her gratitude, all those who can serve her: but I hope your hurts are not painful?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing at all; thanks to your goodness, I am, I may say, wholly recovered; indeed the hurt was so insignificant—

and I have slept, though awakened by an unusual commotion in the house."

"I feared so, much," said the priest.

"An arrival of unexpected guests, I suppose."

"Your conjecture is right: an arrival of guests was the cause of the disturbance which annoyed you."

"Nay, as to that, the annoyance I heed not, but the new comers must be of some rank, from the number of servants, with whom my ear seemed to tell me they were accompanied."

"A gentleman and his daughter, only attended by a moderate retinue," answered the priest, who was not desirous that the name of the guests should be known to Prestwyche—but he was disappointed.

"And his daughter," repeated Prestwyche, "then it must be as I guessed, Sir Gamelyn Vancouver, and the bride that may be, of—of the Knight, with whom I believe, you, Reverend Sir, at present reside."

"And why not at once, of Sir John Chiverton? Is there ought in the name that would blister my patient's lips to pronounce! I would not be thought rudely to interfere, with advice unasked for; but yet, deep and abiding anger, far less hatred, never profited those who harboured it; do not take amiss my words."

"I am sensible of your kindness, in thus interesting yourself, my good Sir, in the conduct of one who has need of such friendly assistance; believe me, I am not ungrateful for it. But you know not the causes which forbid a kindly feeling to be shared between Chiverton and myself."

"I have heard," said the priest, "of the unhappy occasion of strife which arose—"

"True," interrupted Prestwyche, "you have heard of that foolish quarrel, the ostensible cause of a feud, the true sources of which are of as much deeper a nature, as our difference is deeper than the idle broils, that such accidents as you think of give birth to. Were

personal wrongs all I could impute to him, they should seldom rise to remembrance. The mere precaution of absence from the neighbourhood of a man whom I dislike, would then be enough —but the injury I dwell upon is not to Reginald Prestwyche."

"Your words are mysterious, and I fear bode not good. Whom but yourself can Chiverton have injured, to give such deadly cause of quarrel to you?"

"To one whom I have already told you, I value more than myself. To his sister—to your Ellice, your pupil once, who now rejoices to call you friend."

"To his sister! impossible!—what, or how could ——"

"Bear with me, Master Wayword, and you shall hear. That sister whom he persuades others, and would persuade himself, he so dearly regards—her, he wrongs of her inheritance, and keeps immured in his hall yonder, lest the knowledge of her right should over-

turn his schemes of ambition and aggrandizement."

He proceeded to relate to his hearer, those circumstances of Chiverton's conduct with respect to his sister's title to the domains of Chiverton, with which the reader is already acquainted.

Having concluded this detail he continued:

"And now, Master Wayword, can you wonder at our enmity? You were unwilling, I perceived, that I should know of Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver being in this house. You were afraid some difference should take place between us; the knight is free and open hearted, yet choleric; and knows my feud with his intended son-in-law, though unaware as you were of what I have related to you. Can you now object to my seeking and disclosing to him, what I have just detailed. Can you wish that his daughter, amiable and beautiful, as I hear she is, should become the bride of Sir John Chiverton?"

"I am surprised," said the priest, after a pause, "at what you tell me, yet you may be mistaken: have you wherewith to prove what you assert? I doubt not your honour, but others will not hastily believe, what may appear to them an unfounded tale; suspicious, you will allow, as coming from a known enemy. Sir Gamelyn, too, is prejudiced in favour of Chiverton, and by consequence, against you."

"I have proofs," returned the other, "strong enough to confound the arts of Chiverton and his assistants. To-morrow, my servant, whom I have dispatched to bring them hither, will arrive. What then shall delay the disclosure?"

"I am not as yet," said the priest, "able to give advice to assist you in your proceedings; yet I would recommend, that you be not over hasty. Defer this discovery. Sir Gamelyn will be on his road to Chiverton Hall early in the morning, and would hardly delay his journey to examine the proofs you mention, even were they then arrived. Meanwhile, be as-

sured, that Richard Wayword, humble as are his means, will be no patient spectator of mischief, nor will rest without endeavours to counteract it. The well being of Ellice is not less dear to me, than to you. I will guard her as my own child—present not yourself now to Sir Gamelyn or his daughter—let them not know of your residence here—you can, after their departure, follow secretly, if you desire it, to the neighbourhood of the Hall—remain in private, and you may contrive to let me know of your residence; within two days you shall see me again. Till then will you promise me to act no further in this matter?"

"I consent, though with reluctance," answered the youth, "and will give the promise you require. Yet remember, it is the fate of Ellice depends on us—let her not be sacrificed by delay."

"Depend on me," replied the priest, "your confidence shall not be misplaced. And now farewell! I must return to Sir Gamelyn, whom

I left. Doubt not that the right shall succeed—and again farewell !"

He took a friendly and affectionate leave of Prestwyche, and returned to the father and daughter whom he had left.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEN OF DEATH.

Avoid him.—The argument
Is fearful when churchmen stagger in't.
WEBSTER.

THE night succeeding the events which have been detailed, was spent by Ellice in vain endeavours to obtain the rest that comes most slowly when most needed. This, the consequence of the illness which had attacked her exhausted frame, was aggravated by the severity of mental affliction. Her brother and herself, she had ever regarded as linked together by peculiar ties of kindred and affection. Almost

the sole remaining branches of a noble and ancient stock, it seemed that the ties of fraternity should be strengthened by a more than ordinary dependance on each other; an impression which her mind early received, and retained with undiminished force. Those then who know how deeply acute is the pang, when suspicion, though the slightest, enters the mind, of the unworthiness of a beloved object—of the one whom the imagination has delighted to invest with the qualities that can best inspire, or heighten affection, need not be told what were the feelings of Ellice, excited by the words of Prestwyche respecting her brother. It is, indeed, a harsh voice that tells us, that the images that the heart had given birth to, and which hope and memory have joined to foster, till they have become a new existence, and interwoven with the spirit's every most secret aspiration, are after all a dream, as frail and illusory as the frost work glittering in the morning beams, and worse than all, as chilling. When

confidence has no longer whereon it may repose, nor hope whereunto it may turn its gaze, the death of happiness is not afar off. In that hour, endurance itself fails, and the heart indeed knoweth its own bitterness.

The physician, on visiting his patient early in the morning, found her accordingly restless, fevered, and dispirited. After the customary inquiries, and such directions as he judged proper, he retired to communicate to Chiverton, the result of his visit.

He found him in an apartment, which from the frequent repetitions among the carvings of its pannels, of the figure of the mermaid, was known among the household, by the name of the Maiden's Chamber: there was not wanting, however, an imperfect tradition, which assigned as the origin of this denomination, circumstances of a fearful and mysterious nature, connected with the fate of a lady, the daughter of a former inmate of the hall. The feeling thus attached to the room, was heightened by its ap-

pearance and situation: the darkness of the wood-work, with which its walls were clothed, lent to it a gloom, which the dim light that fell through a single casement, could but partially dispel. This window commanded a view, broken and intercepted by the intervening branches of the river, and a part of the scenery, including the cave beyond it. It was built over the deepest vaults of the castle, with which it was said to have some secret communication, and so situated, as to be overlooked by no other part of the mansion. A sentiment of fear was attached to it in the minds of all the inmates of the Hall, excepting only Chiverton, his two more immediate followers, and the lady Ellice, the latter of whom, took an interest in the melancholy spot, and would often retire thither, when the evening sun slanted his deepening beams athwart the sparkling river, and the variegated hues of the spreading foliage. To all others, the chamber was a spot interdicted, as well by their fears as by the com-

mands of Chiverton, who often held there his conferences with his most especial counsellors and associates.

On the entry of the physician, he perceived Chiverton seated at the extremity of the room, and apparently absorbed in gloomy meditations. At a little distance, stood the dark form of Mahmood Bali, in his usual posture, his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the ground, The latter cast a momentary glance on the physician, but the Knight remained, as it seemed, unconscious of his entrance. Scymel approached the casement, and without interrupting the silent mood of Chiverton, gazed leisurely on the river, whose sullen waters glided beneath the chamber with a noiseless progress. The contrast presented by the countenances of the three, was worthy observation. The clouded aspect of the Knight bore an expression of disquiet, that seemed at times heightened to the bitterness of remorse, and was agitated at intervals by sudden and violent gleams of passion. Strik-

ingly different was the cold and placid indifference, that reposed in the looks of the physician, and seemed to disown all kindred or sympathy with the feelings or business of mankind. Yet ere he had long continued in the chamber, his features changed, and became almost beautiful, as one of those momentary gleams passed over them, which sometimes intimated that the cold and sneering spirit that characterized Scymel, was not the natural inmate of his breast; it came, amid the eclipse of hope and feeling, like the memory that haunts us in dreams, of those early flowers of the heart, whose first decay tells us they know no second spring. The Moor alone preserved, without relaxation, and without alloy of aught savouring of humanity, the steady expression of cherished malice.

Chiverton was the first to break the prevailing silence. Rising suddenly from his seat, he abruptly approached the physician, and grasping his wrist with an earnestness that almost startled

him, gazed for a brief space steadily upon him ere he spoke.

" Remember, Walter," said he at last, " it was thou who didst advise it."

" Advised what, Sir John ?—you are pleased to—"

" What ! what ! say'st thou ;—that thou canst look as thou lookest now, and ask me, *what.*—It were enough, by heaven !—" his tone rose almost to fierceness—then suddenly dropping it, he added—" Go ask Mahmood Bali—mute as he is, he may refresh thy memory."

" I should grieve, noble Sir," returned the physician, " that my temporary absence of mind should give birth to your displeasure. In truth I deemed not that the subject, on which alone, I now bethink me, I have of late presumed to offer my poor opinion, had so engrossed your mind, as to cause that earnestness in your demeanour towards your servant but now, which I was about to attribute to some cause of

weightier moment, of which I was ignorant But I rejoice, that——"

"Stay, Walter Scymel," said the Knight, interrupting by a slight motion of his hand the physician's discourse, "stay a while—thou say'st thou understandest of what I speak; and did'st yet treat it as a thing of no moment; a deed by which, I fear me, the honour of Chiverton hath taken a wound that will be long in healing; and it hath escaped thy memory, who wert it's author. I would fain know, of what mould thou art made, that canst look with eye unmoved, and mind undisturbed, on scenes which others shudder but to hear of."

"I know not, Sir," returned the physician, "how I have merited what bears the semblance of a reproach. It may be, that in my humble zeal for your service, I have disregarded those distinctions in the nature of actions which the very herd who profess to be governed by them can neither understand nor practice,

and which, therefore, I account but nominal and chimerical. Ask me what is most fitting to be done; I tell you, that which is most expedient. Such I deemed to be the measure I ventured to recommend, and as such I advised it. Yet had I foreseen the annoyance its execution would cause you, I had forborn to speak so openly."

"Nay, Scymel," answered Chiverton, "I blame not thee for thy advice, given with sincerity. Yet this deed—I know not how it is, hangs heavily on my mind. I would it had not been, yet cannot wish it undone."

"I cannot but marvel," said Scymel, "that the firmness which men were wont so much to admire in Sir John Chiverton, should, pardon me, Sir, seem in this business to have given place to a changeful hesitation unsuited to the daring spirit of a soldier, to your former actions, and to your present purposes. Your own sword blade can testify, that its master's hand hath not been nerveless; on occasions, too, whose weight,

when compared with the present, were but as the warrior's plume to the steel on which it nods."

"True," returned the Knight; "but mine have ever been encounters, in which my enemy has had an equal chance with myself. I have lain in no ambush—have studied no secrecy. Sword to sword, and blow for blow, none can accuse me of unfairness: if my adversary fell, as it was his fate, so it might have been mine."

The physician smiled. "And yet," said he, "how easily might unequal strength or unequal skill make this combat, which you, Sir, esteem for its fairness, capable but of one termination. You see yon heron," he pointed through the casement as he spoke, "how stately he soars above yon cluster of tall beeches; he has alighted on the topmost branch; with what a lordly air he flaps his wings, as he sways on the pliant bough. Suppose, my lord, your favourite gerfalcon let loose upon the victim;—how swift would be his flight; how fearful his terrors, the agony of pursuit—the fruitless strain-

ing of his torn sinews, the panting fierceness of his closing struggle—how would they add to the pangs of death, to the pain which, unaccompanied by such additions, had been but of a moment—a speedy cessation of the animal life. And now, Mahmood, if I mistake not, there lies a cross-bow behind thee."—He fitted the instrument which the Moor handed him, a ponderous, and then popular weapon; opened the casement, claimed with a glance of his eyes the attention of Chiverton, and in a moment the heron fell fluttering to the ground, and his shattered plumage floated on the air."

"A Scymel! a Scymel!" shouted the Knight, forgetting in this momentary enthusiasm of the sportsman, the anxieties which tormented him, "a better shot, trust me, I have not seen, since Soy Hetmel, my father's ranger, won the prize of shooting on my own birth-day. And thou, too, the fastidious scholar—the scornful Walter Scymel, to excel in an art that pertains to men of rough jerkin, and ready hand—by the mermaid, I would not have thought it."

"In my younger days," said the physician, "I took delight in these toys." (Did the tone of indifference, with which he spoke betray that, even in the skill which he affected to despise, there was room for the subtle sin of vanity—powerful in the strongest and weakest minds—to shew its workings?) "But whether is the more merciful, the hawk's beak, or the bow's bullet?"

"Well, well," replied the Knight impatiently, "have it as thou list. I would sooner seek to reclaim a bald-headed kite from his rakings, than thee from thy opinions. But it is idle to talk—I am in the path, and may not, nay, will not turn aside. Fears, I have none—a Chiverton cannot feel them." He drew himself up as he spake in proud and desperate defiance of the thoughts that visibly tortured and oppressed him. Absorbed in his own emotions, he perceived not the smiles that severally passed over the countenances of his companions. The cold suppressed sneer of the physician, and the sullen contortion—half smile, half grin, of the Moor's

features, denoted them apt at appreciating the mental state of their lord.

The sudden splash of oars in the water of the river arrested Scymel's attention. "Here," he exclaimed as he cast a glance through the casement, "come news, good or bad—what can have caused Niel Jaggar to quit his cave?"

"Niel Jaggar, say'st thou?" asked the Knight.

"Even so, my lord, as you may yourself see; he comes with speed, he will be here anon."

"I marvel, too, what brings him hither," said Chiverton; "though, in truth, I have a light guess. Some detected villany, carried with too open a hand, brings him to seek shelter here till the storm blows over, or he needs somewhat to furnish his larder. It is rarely that aught pertaining to my affairs turns his course this way."

"We shall know the cause ere long," said the physician; "he has already landed, and has gone round, I presume, to the front gate. Is it your pleasure to admit him, if he seeks your presence?"

"Aye," returned the Knight, "let him in, my state council will then be complete. A goodly fellowship, I trow—I would fain find one more to add to the number."

"It were needless, my lord," returned the physician drily, "so long as the firmness and daring resolve of the chief supply the deficiencies of his counsellors."

The Knight turned abruptly upon the speaker; indignation at the sarcasm thus flung upon him inflamed his features, and almost deprived him of self-possession. The cold gaze of the physician's eye underwent no change; it might be, that an added expression of scorn augmented the customary appearance of his features, shadowed under an assumed bearing of deep respect. The rising fury of Chiverton sank before it; he turned away, but addressing himself to Scymel as he passed him, said in a low and half stifled voice, "Thou art said to be prudent; thy best prudence will be to stop in time—I bear not mockery."

The answer of the physician, if he designed

any, was prevented by the knocking at the door of the chamber of one seeking admittance. The Knight himself drew back the bolt, and the door again opening, gave entrance to Niel Jagger, the same dark, gross, ruffian-stamped object, with whom the reader is already acquainted as the inhabitant of the cave, whither Prestwyche bore his rescued mistress.

The savage made some such obeisance to Chiverton as a bear pays to his keeper, when under the immediate dread of torture; and passing on, seated his unwieldy and misshapen form on the first stool within his reach. A sullen stare was all the notice he deigned to the other inmates of the apartment; and taking from his girdle a leathern flask, he applied it with a voracious eagerness to his lips. Probably the quantity of the contents was less than he had contemplated, from the speed with which he withdrew the vessel, and the demeanour of mortification with which he cast it on the floor. The Knight motioned to Scymel, who unlocking

a small door in a pannel of the wainscotting, brought forth a silver goblet of antique workmanship, and of tolerable capacity. Into this he emptied an earthen bottle, and placed the cup within the reach of Jaggar, who seized it without speaking, and drained it at a single draught.

"Give him more, give him more," whispered the Knight to Scymel after a short pause, "we shall never get him to speak else, or communicate his tidings if he has any."

"It were well, my lord to wait a little," returned the physician, in the same suppressed tone; "the aqua mirabilis will work speedily, and loosen his tongue. A repetition of it would defeat our object—even his brutal brain could not resist such another draught."

Accordingly, the lapse of a few minutes verified the physician's expectations. The sullen being seemed aroused from his lethargy, and staring around him, said, though without addressing any one in particular, "Well now, what want ye with me?"

"Nay," returned the physician, "thine own will brought thee hither. No one invited thee—no one, I will venture to affirm, wants thee here."

"By your leave, quick Master Doctor, you do want me."

"And wherefore, prithee, may we be in such need of thy co-operation, which thou hast vouchsafed to come from thy pleasant dwelling to offer to us? Is it thy advice thou deemest we lack, or thy sleight of hand?"

"Both, Master Scymel, an you ask. But I will not speak with you, Master Doctor: you are a wise man, and reckon too much of your wit and learning; and you're a knowing man—but there be other cunning coves beside you and old Satan, if there be such a body. And black Bali, too, yonder, he thinks himself, and you think him, a clean hand at a pinch, when a lad happens to have a windpipe more than you suppose he's need for. And yet——"

"Now may the fiend whose bondsman thou

art, seize thee—can'st not make an end of thy foolery, and tell thy tale if thou hast one;—if not get thee to the butler, drink thy drink and begone," said Chiverton, impatient at the unwonted length to which Niel seemed disposed to extend his speech.

"I have that to tell," returned the other, "you would not miss the hearing of, for as much drink as would set all the crew of the Jolly Rover, an they were alive, asking where were their heads and where their feet, and none be able to give a word of answer."

"Were all the members of the goodly fellowship thou speakest of, gifted with such a short winded manner of tale-telling as thyself," inquired the physician, "if so, a dull evening, in a dead calm, must needs have passed pleasantly."

"I guess, Master Doctor," returned he of the cave, "from a mark on your neck, you'll be glad some of these days to be longer winded than you're like to be."

"Now evil betide thee with thy prating folly," exclaimed the Knight, "if thou tells't not instantly what thou hast to inform us, thou shalt be silenced for ever. Speak, villain, or——"

"An you be so hasty," interrupted Niel, "e'en take the news—but it might be as well you put that blade of yours into its house again. I may like get my head split for my tidings else."

The Knight hurled the sword to the farther end of the room, and compressing his rage, stood in gloomy expectation of the promised tidings."

"A good blade by St. Margery," muttered Jaggar, "how it leapt when it fell." A look from Chiverton, reminded him that the Knight was in no mood for trifling.

"Well then," continued he, "what I have to tell is, that Mahmood Bali is not the same deft hand at aiming a fire-piece, as at driving a five inch steel."

"How now—what means this?" said the

Knight hastily, "speak to the point—we need no riddles—this is no child's play."

"Answer me this then—went not Mahmood Bali, yester morn, with some slight message for him you call Reginald Prestwyche."

"What of him?—speak quickly."

"Nay an you wish to hear of him, he is alive and well, and may likely come himself e'er long to tell you so much."

"It cannot be," said the knight, gazing with a bewildered astonishment at the physician, who cast a look of equal surprise upon the Moor. The last stood unmoved.

"It cannot be," repeated Chiverton, "it is not possible. Thou ravest, Niel Jaggar, or liest—I know not whether."

"E'en as you list," replied Niel, suddenly; "I have said my say, you are welcome to believe or not—my business is done. I reckon old Sym Harvins, the butler you call him, has a stoup of the old aquavita left to fill my bottle?"

"Stay where thou art—thou shalt see Harvins presently—I am astounded at this tale."

"What says Mahmood to this mishap?" asked the physician.

The Moor advanced towards them, until he arrived within three paces of Chiverton: he fixed his eyes slowly and successively, upon each of the three, and then assuming the attitude and motions of one aiming and firing an arquebuss, he instantly followed that action by darting down his hand violently, as denoting the rapid fall of some object to the earth. This done, he resumed his accustomed posture, save that his look was more direct than was wont, and his eyes, fixed on Niel Jaggar, seemed to challenge denial to the asseveration conveyed by his gestures.

"You see, my lord," said the physician, "Mahmood denies the account which Jaggar has so aptly and concisely delivered to us. When, and where was it," addressing himself to Niel, "that thou sawest Reginald Prestwyche?"

"Repeat not his name," said Chiverton to the last speaker, in a suppressed and painful tone,—"it jars on my ears too harshly."

"I told you not," replied Jaggar to the query of the physician, "that I had seen that youth."

"Whence then comes thy information?" exclaimed the Knight. "I will no more endure this trifling."

"Gilbert Brandreth met this Prestwyche, with a serving man, this morning, an hour after sunrise, to the west of the Abbey Cleugh."

"How were they coming?" asked the physician.

"They were on foot when Gilbert saw them."

"And how did he know Prestwyche? he has been away from these parts—how long is it, Scymel?—These things distract me—do thou question him."

"Gilbert knew him long ere he went abroad—he was at Derby when——"

A vengeful look from Chiverton, directed towards the speaker, interrupted his discourse,

and indicated, at the same time, that the allusion to the bye past times awakened in the Knight's breast, emotions of no grateful nature.

"'Tis strange," said the physician; "I would this were unravelled.—Need you longer the attendance of Niel Jaggar, my lord?"

"No—thou may'st be gone—the butler will give thee aught thou lackest. And warn Brandreth, that he be secret; and keep a keen look out both of ye."

"And if his luck cast him in our way, this may be serviceable mayhap." As Jaggar spoke, he exhibited the handle and part of the blade of a weapon, of the shape, but exceeding the size, of an ordinary knife, which, concealed under the rude garment of its owner, was ready for any purpose he might apply it to.

"No—on thy life, thou knave, harm him not; but be sure thou bring intelligence of his motions."

"Well, well," growled the savage, as he

departed, "e'en as you list; it's all one to Niel Jaggar."

"Get thee gone," exclaimed the Knight, as the door of the apartment closed after Niel; "brute as thou art, and dull to all save villany, I marvel, Scymel, where, and to what end, thou did'st pick up this fellow—he is in truth a goodly looking retainer."

"My lord," answered the physician, "savage as he is—a midway thing between beast and humanity, there is in him what may be useful, and what at a pinch we might find elsewhere with difficulty. He hath no reason to examine, and may therefore more aptly exert the cunning which he possesses to execute. His habits, too, fit him for a serviceable instrument."

"But can'st thou expect," asked the Knight, "to find fidelity in this animal? Would not a slight cause make the wind change, that now blows him to our commands?"

"Grant, Sir, that it did; what then?—Let

him prove false—and what is more, let him escape an he could from your domains, which, did a doubt arise of his steadiness, were not a trifling task—and what were you the worse? Let him fly, there is not a town he would approach, but every varlet of the law would scent him—the noose hangs round his neck, and every step would but draw the knot the tighter. Who would believe his words? even the few he might utter, whilst breath was left him to vent his tales. And trust me, my lord, there is no retainer who inhabits these walls, whose every motion—nay, whose very thoughts I know not too well, for them to possess the power to do you ill, even so long as while their purpose were maturing."

"Stay," exclaimed the Knight hastily, "I hear the trampling of horses—listen, the sound is yet distant."

"Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver, doubtless, with the lady your bride."

"Would she were—yet I fear me much—this cursed mishap of Mahmood's—"

"Does that trouble you, my lord?—you seemed but now to regret that the design were, as we then thought it, accomplished."

"Perchance I might; but the attempt made, and unsuccessful, is worse than all. He cannot fail to divine to whom he owes his noonday salutation. He may,—'tis more than probable he *has* seen Sir Gamelyn, and if it be so,"—he paused.

"And if it be so—what follows? Sir Gamelyn would pay such regard to his words, as your hawk to the call of the hinds that till your grounds. Sir Gamelyn knows him not, save as your enemy, and knowing so much, would treat his story accordingly. He would laugh at the tale, as a springe too poor to catch the tamest woodcock."

"Still though it were as thou sayest—suspicion might be awakened. I would the deed

had been done, though I loathe the thought of so dealing with a foe. But this is not the time for this question; they will presently be here —my sister I fear, will not be able to join me in receiving my guests. Hast thou seen her yet?"

"I left her but to seek you, my lord—questionless, she cannot with safety desert her chamber."

"Well I, or thou, as her physician, must make her excuses—see'st thou aught of these comers?"

"They are even now emerging from the wood—and, as I live, a goodly company. The ornaments of the riders do glitter in the sun, as gaily as on a royal progress. Sir Gamelyn—a goodly looking—his daughter—your bride—and worthy, as I may judge from her mien, to be the mistress of a noble and ancient house."

"It is, indeed, an ancient house—I would not, that I should be the last of my name to inherit its honours and its possessions, decayed as they are from their early splendour. I would

this marriage were over—that past, Sir Gamelyn's ample possessions added to mine, the Chiverton shall again be what he has erst been, free and unshackled as the mermaid in her deeps."

"I know not, my lord, what should bar the completion of your views. Sir Gamelyn is as eager for the union as yourself—the tale that Prestwyche alone could tell him, he has either not heard, or having heard must have disbelieved, or, should a suspicion remain, how easily were it removed. Prestwyche disposed of, the tale will die away, without a chance of revival."

"It may be—I trust it will be so, Walter. Meanwhile do thou see that our steward hath ordered whatever may be fitting for the reception of our guests—I will prepare me to meet them." With these words the knight left the apartment.

The physician lingered. He gazed from the casement upon the party, some of whom had already entered the ferryman's vessel, which had

been dispatched to transport them across the river. A part of the attendants were first conveyed; the lady and her women meanwhile dismounted from their steeds, and stood, accompanied by Sir Gamelyn, in readiness for the voyage. Their followers were gaily apparelled; light plumes waved in the breezes, and the bright sunbeams sparkled on the decorated trappings of the horses. The physician had before noted the gallant appearance of the company.

"She comes gaily," said he: "it is well that the light heart should laugh whilst it can; how soon may smiles be turned to tears. They fable that the swan sings but at life's closing; the hues of the dolphin are most lovely as he dies. The dreams of happiness are worse than vain—the soft heart breaks with them, the stronger lives on, to laugh at, and scorn the delusion."

He remained a few moments longer in the chamber, watching the motions of the new

comers, and then departed to see that all was prepared for their accommodation.

On landing at that side of the river on which the hall stood, Sir Gamelyn and his daughter were received by an assemblage of those gallants, to whom the hall afforded a residence. Their appearance and demeanour had something that imposed on the fancy. All men who had been accustomed to mix in the world, their manners partook of that high strain of courtesy, and that devotion to the female sex, by which the time was distinguished. The arrival of a lady, who both by birth and station was entitled to claim their utmost respect, was an event so rare, that these gentles of the place—the younger part especially—eagerly seized on the opportunity of putting in practice, those nice doctrines of fine breeding, which, except when the presence of Chiverton's sister graced their excursions, were perforce condemned to lie dormant, to the no small mortification of their real or fancied possessors. Indeed, many of them,

who had some years back ruffled it with the bravest in the capital, and whose scanty means alone induced them to leave the scenes where the loveliness and the chivalry of the land were gathered together, and where splendour, and wit and beauty, conspired to shed a halo of imaginative brilliancy around their daily life, cast back internally many a lingering look, and were nigh ready to weep when they thought upon Babylon.

Along with these were others, forming more avowedly a part of the retainers of Chiverton: the aged steward, the superintendant of the household, leaned on his staff, with an air of importance, which his ancient and venerable appearance prevented from being ridiculous, save to the unhallowed imaginations of one or two youngsters, who did not always refrain from breaking a joke on the language and demeanour of Master Martin Misseltoe. Advancing before the rest, by virtue of his office, the steward first welcomed the blushing bright-eyed fair one to her new home. He was followed by the gallants

already spoken of; and a dingy collection of domestics and buff-coated men at arms, whose lack of present occupation generally left them at leisure to bear a part, either as actors or spectators, in whatsoever went forward in the vicinity of the hall, filled up the back ground, a sort of relief to the gay braveries of their superiors.

"Now by this light," exclaimed one of the byestanders, the cock of whose beaver, and studied curl of mustachio, lent to his countenance a somewhat Spanish air, "a very fair beauty trust me; a blue eye and a laughing; a most sweet smile in sooth; and her forehead is as tall and ample, simply as any I may have seen, since that I returned from foreign parts."

"Which having been some twelve years ago," interrupted one who stood near him, "and the recital thereof grown daily twelve times more tedious, it were to be wished that God would deprive thee of the power of speech, or thine acquaintance of the faculty of hearing."

"Of a verity," answered the first speaker, "that were too severe—to those of my acquaint-

ance, Master Vivian especially, who being even now void of understanding, to deprive them of hearing were somewhat more than just."

"Thou hast spoken well," retorted the other, "Coragio, man of travel—thy discourse is, indeed, curiously severe, and fancifully quaint—adorned with——"

Here he was interrupted, for the lovely Isabel at the instant stepping from the light vessel to the bank, an emulous eagerness to assist her caused a sudden rush towards the spot on which she stepped; one consequence of which had nigh been the overthrow of the steward. The offended man of office, vainly stretching out his arm to check the impetuous forwardness of the crowd, essayed to rebuke them; but he was stayed in the onset of his speech by the traveller, who passing by him, cut short his intended admonitions.

"Are the snows of winter," said he, "fit companionship for the roses of summer, or the wrinkled face of age for the blooming tenderness

of beauty's countenance? Or is it seeming, that the eagles should give place to the owl, or the civility of courtesy to the rudeness of rusticity?" Then addressing himself to the lady, around whom all bowed with the devotion due to birth and loveliness—" Incomparable lady, you see around you the humblest of your slaves, all eager to pay the honour due, not only to the daughter of Sir Gamelyn Vancouver, but to the bride of our noble host."

" Host, quotha," muttered the discomfited steward, " *master* were as apt one might think."

A look of contemptuous indignation was the sole reply deigned to this observation by the interrupted speaker, who continued his discourse. " For as the most precious jewel becomes yet more precious, when adorned by the curious skill of the lapidary, so beauty, whose price excelleth jewels, is yet more estimable, when set in the high regard of valour and courtesy."

" Alas, Sir," returned the maiden, with a seriousness, evidently adopted as a veil to the

comic emotions engendered by the fantastic absurdity of the address with which she had been greeted: "Alas, you speak a language, too rich in the flowers of stately eloquence, for such as I rightly, I fear, to comprehend; far less to answer. I am a simple maiden, educated in retirement, and little conversant with the manners or language of the world. Let me then, courteous Sir, entreat, that waving all holiday and too recondite terms, you would speak, as alone I can reply, in the unadorned mother tongue of my country."

But the orator was not thus to be stayed from indulging in his vein. "Transparent, indeed," he recommenced, "is the veil which humility throws over true worthiness. Seek not then, lady, to disclaim, what the meanest eye discerns to be especially your own; that refined breeding, which indisposeth its possessor to the gross conceptions and barren phrase of the herd vulgar. For as——"

"A truce with thy similes, Mountfort," in-

terrupted a middle aged personage, who seemed to possess some degree of influence over the rest, "the lady hath I warrant me had enow of them. There be here, Madam, I will dare affirm, loyal hearts and good swords ready to await your bidding; nor does my friend Mountfort lack in the befitting qualities of a gentleman and a soldier, though his phrase be of the quaintest, and his periods somewhat long. For myself, and my companions, I may say that the homage which beauty demands, other considerations combine to exact; that in the welcome which your servants tender, our lips are but the ministers and interpreters of our hearts. Nor hath report," added he, "left us ignorant of the honoured name and worthiness of Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver."

"Sir," answered the Knight, who had been listening with sad civility to the prosing harangues of Master Misseltoe, "I hold myself unfortunate in knowing not to whom I return my thanks for your welcome to us. During my

brief tarrying here, I shall rejoice in your society, if better occupations prevent you not from so far favouring me."

"Faynton is my name," returned the other; "I shall be honoured by your commands, and trust our residence will be longer graced with your presence, than your present speech betokens."

"In that the Lady Isabel must be our advocate," said the priest, who having lingered awhile, after crossing the river, to give some necessary directions, now rejoined them: "Sir Gamelyn will not sure be so hasty in his farewell to a loved and affectionate child. Some months at least must see him abiding among us."

"In truth, ye judge amiss, Master Priest," exclaimed the Knight; "think ye I have no better quest than to follow my daughter's apron string, like one of those tame dogs, and other brutes, that women love to fondle, and make as useless and helpless as themselves?"

"Surely, Sir," said the Knight's new acquaintance, "that women are helpless, is cause unfit for reproach—ought not man more to rejoice, that his strength may yield defence to woman's weakness, and his valour be the safeguard of her timidity? And how can that sex be said useless, who, (setting aside what should not be forgotten, their kindly watchfulness and unwearying endurance,) possess a charm, that calls into play every better thought and nobler feeling of man's nature. Does not the aim grow purer in her sanction—the purpose more fixed by her encouragement—the sword more bright by her smile? Born to be alike loved and honoured by those who are fitted to appreciate her worth, it is but among the savage tribes of rude barbarians that the tribute is denied, to which her virtues entitle her."

"Heaven grant me patience!" exclaimed the Knight, good humouredly, "how these bachelors do talk. An thou change not thy note before thou die—God giving thee years to learn more

wit—pierce me with a cloth-yard's shaft, and hang me as a butt for Cupid's archery."

"Sir Gamelyn doth but jest, Master Fairfield," said the priest, "the father of such a daughter could not think lightly of her sex."

"You say true, Master Wayword," answered the Knight, "and could her father do so, the husband of her mother could not. Isabel is a good girl—her mother's like in all. But how now, girl—so sad? where are all thy smiles fled unto. Cheer up, wench; enter not this gate with a dim eye or a heavy heart."

They had by this attained the front entrance of the hall. The steward had hastened before as well as his decayed strength would permit, and now enjoyed the self complacency, with which he led the way through the arched gateway that opened into the court; on either side of which were ranked the retainers of the master of the place. Nor were the retainers and domestics of those times, the same as now fill up the establishments of the noble and wealthy.

They did not then, as now, tread close upon the heels of their employers, nor was servility a substitute for service. The lines of demarcation were more plainly drawn out between the classes of a community, and the servant thought not of aping the manners, the dress, or the vices of the master. Attached to the spot, in which many of them had probably grown up from youth, and devoted to the family, with which they deemed themselves, in a manner, allied by the long exchange of service and protection, the idea of a change of their abode rarely offered itself to their minds. These ties, which the progress of time continually strengthened, caused will and duty to go hand in hand, and as there was a degree of satisfaction, increased by the prejudices of the time, in being attended by these ancestral servants, kindness on the part of the superior completed the link, which was commenced by the wants and the abilities of the dependant.

Isabel returned with grace the respectful

obeisances of the ranks between which she passed, conducted by her father, and closely followed by the two female attendants who had accompanied her in the journey. She paused for a moment as she traversed the court. Was it strange that sadness should for a while display itself in the lineaments of a countenance, whose native expression was one of smiling cheerfulness? In thus entering a mansion, upon which she looked as the residence of her future life, how much was there to arouse dormant, and hitherto unknown emotions. To sever bonds, in which the heart has from infancy been fondly held, and to enter suddenly into others, known only by anticipation; to untwine that intricate cordage of the feelings, which binds us strongly, even to inanimate objects, and still more closely to those with whom we have been united by the pleasing tyranny of cherished affections, is a task from which the bosom recoils. In the hour of bitterness when these things come upon us, will not the spirit faint, and the heart droop, and

hope depart, and joy be turned to heaviness. It will—Isabel felt it must be so.

Desirous that her emotions should not be evident to the byestanders, she passed hastily on, and they entered the mansion. After partaking slightly of the refreshments placed before them, the travellers were conducted to the chambers prepared for their residence, the decorations and furnishing of which corresponded with the condition of their intended inmates.

Some time had elapsed, when Sir Gamelyn and his daughter were informed by the good priest, that Chiverton anxiously awaited their pleasure, and entreated permission to wait upon them. "We will ourselves attend our host," said the old Knight, "and you, worthy Sir, will please for the nonce to be our guide."

"Sir John," replied the priest, "is now below, and awaits your answer; your appearance will be the most welcome reply to his inquiries."

They left the apartment, which, adjoining to

the sleeping chamber of Sir Gamelyn and his daughter, opened into the gallery, which directly communicated with the great staircase. They admired, as they descended, the elaborate carvings with which the wainscotting was adorned. Some of the larger pannels were plain, and here were suspended the antique representations of former tenants of the mansion, pourtrayed in a style of art, of which few specimens remain; the productions of imperfect conception and execution, which would now be termed barbarous. But the very circumstances which to modern judgments would render the perpetrators of those venerable portraitures objects of execration, rendered the pictures appropriate to their present station, so well did their stiff severity accord with the gloomy, but not unpleasant shade in which they were enveloped.

Having gained the apartment in which Chiverton now was, the priest flung open the door, and introduced his companions. The

room into which they entered was spacious, and more lofty than the style of the age generally admitted of. The tapestry with which its walls were clothed, the beautiful manufacture of the looms of Flanders, was adorned with loopings and fringes of gold, which the lapse of years had but slightly tarnished. Around the apartment were placed stools, covered with dark crimson velvet, and a table of polished cypress wood occupied the centre of the floor.

On the entry of his guests, Chiverton was standing at the upper end of the room, attended only by Scymel, the Moor, and Louis Faynton, the person who had conversed with Sir Gamelyn on his arrival. If he lingered for a moment ere he approached to welcome his guests, it might be owing to a degree of personal vanity, which, considering the advantage to which he appeared as he stood, his handsome and commanding figure, prominent among the group, might perhaps be pardonable. The delay, however, if any, was too slight to be percepti-

ble, and Chiverton laying aside the jewelled cap with which he was covered, advanced towards the entrance of the apartment.

" Were eloquence," said he, " ever the attendant of sincerity, the welcome I rejoice to offer to Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver and his lovely daughter, would be conveyed in expressions worthy of such guests. But unable, as a solitary and retired individual must be, to command those courtly phrases, with which the ear of beauty is wont to be greeted, I can but seek in your favourable allowances, an excuse for my own defects, and strive that the zeal of service may compensate for the homeliness of speech."

" We doubt not we are welcome, Sir John," returned Sir Gamelyn, " whereby the less need of words to entertain your friends. But if it please you, we will pass on, and you shall make us known to the gentlemen your friends yonder."

" Most willingly," replied Chiverton. " I

know not whether these two gentlemen be of your acquaintance—Master Louis Faynton is."

"Ah!" interrupted Vancouver, "he and I have already become known. But this other worthy gentleman I know not, to my recollection."

"You have heard though, Sir Gamelyn, of the learned leech;—Master Scymel you cannot fail to know by report."

"By the mass no, surely," exclaimed the old Knight, "I know his name well; Sir, I desire your better acquaintance. And now—but—" he stopped short as he turned towards the Moor, and apparently for the first time noticed his aspect. Mahmood changed not his downcast glance, but Sir Gamelyn seemed confused and discomposed at the sight of his host's unseemly attendant. Respect for Chiverton prevented his observing upon his follower, but the singularly compounded looks of fear and disgust, which he threw from time to time to-

wards the Moor's station, sufficiently made known to his entertainer, the feelings of the old Knight; nor did Isabel seem wholly free from the contagion of similar emotions. Chiverton perceived that some explanation, though unasked, was tacitly sought, and placing his arm within the old man's, at the same time taking with an air of deep respect, the hand of the daughter, he drew them both towards the other extremity of the apartment.

"My honoured, my beloved guests," said he, looking as he spoke with a submissive glance towards Isabel, "marvel that among my followers there should be one, whose complexion and features seem to have marked him for an object unpleasing as a near attendant. They will wonder, perhaps, more when told, that besides the accidental circumstance of his country, Mahmood Bali (for so is my follower called) suffers under a heavier calamity, in the deprivation of the faculty of speech. It may seem strange, that I should choose to retain this man

in immediate attendance on my person. But, when I say, that I have experienced his fidelity and utility in many services of moment, and that I have owed to him the preservation of my existence, I may indulge a hope that my kind guests will behold Mahmood with less disfavour, albeit he suffers those disadvantages which it may be are a claim to pity, rather than harsher feeling."

"You are right, Sir John," returned the old Knight, "we will forge this colour; but, swords and bucklers! when I first saw him, I did feel a sort of strange humour upon me. But I have other matter of inquiry—the Lady Ellice; will she not honour us? my daughter looked for a kind reception from one of whom she had heard much, and wishes to know more."

The old Knight's words had given rise to a sudden and suspicious glance from his host, but the continuation of his speech dispelled the fears which the first mention of Ellice had occasioned in Chiverton's breast.

"I lament, Sir Gamelyn," he answered, "that my sister, whom you favour with your kind recollections, labours at this present time under a malady which confines her to her chamber, the consequence of an untoward accident, which may be related to you at more idle leisure. Master Scymel here"—they had now regained the upper extremity of the room, "can testify how involuntarily she is withheld from paying her duty, where her affections will, I trust, be speedily claimed by a close and endearing affinity."

"'Tis an unlucky event," returned Vancouver, "we are like to be all sufferers by it; we will hope not long—but meantime Isabel can attend her, and—"

"I thank your goodness," interrupted Chiverton; "but she is so accustomed to her own attendants, that I will not avail me of the offer you have kindly made, and which my lovely mistress, I see, confirms by the silent speech of eyes, which —— "

"Oh, Sir," exclaimed the lady, "pass over my eyes, I beseech you; remember the creature with the brightest, bears inwardly the most venom. But surely I might more tenderly relieve the wants and ease the sufferings of the Lady Ellice, than her domestics. Be they ever so skilful, so grateful to a mistress, who cannot but claim their gratitude, the ministerings of a sister's hand must be more prompt, than those of a dependant."

"You will permit me, lady," said Scymel, "though respecting the feelings which call forth your proposal, to interpose against the exercise of such an intention. The attendants of the Lady Ellice, habituated to my directions, understand and obey them with more exactitude than others less accustomed could be able. You will pardon this interference, the course I recommend will be the best for all."

Though the lady evidently brooked unwillingly the authority of the physician, she made no reply. Her father, however, upheld the

right of Scymel to direct all arrangements touching his patient. Then turning to the window, near which he stood, he broke into exclamations on the beauty of the surrounding scenery, that led to a more general conversation. This, however, tending nothing to the progress of our history, may be well prætermitted.

Some time elapsed, when Scymel, after the interchange of a glance between Chiverton and himself, seized some occasion to withdraw from the apartment all save Sir Gamelyn, his daughter, and Chiverton.

"I think," said the physician when they had left the apartment, "the company of others is not at present like to be very welcome to those we have left. At least the business in hand is of a nature that requires few interlocutors."

"You judge well," returned Faynton, "courtship is a flower that brooks not much gazing on 'Tis a fit evening for such a genetle colloquy, as is wont to stream from the hurried

lips of lovers. Leave we them to their converse —a stroll to the river's bank will occupy our minutes, who have no such serious matters on hand. What think you, gentlemen—is the motion good?"

They assented to this proposal, and the party strolled towards the overhanging rocks, whose base confined the river on that side. The prospect was certainly a lovely one, and the rich suffusion of the evening splendour, shed over it as they gazed a mellowness of tints that sank pleasantly on the eye. The priest surveyed with a calm and delighted aspect, the expanse of the deepening sky as its thousand hues blended together in the vast and beautiful arch.

The physician's looks were fixed on the dark dull waters that rolled at the base of the rock, and it seemed that his gaze sought to penetrate their depths, and dive into their secrets. Louis Faynton, less occupied by reflection, threw a lighter glance around him, and enjoyed in their

turn, all the varieties of beauty that lay within his ken. The Moor stood as usual unmoved, and observant only of the motions of the others.

The silence in which they were buried was first interrupted by Faynton, who exclaimed that he saw Jaggar issuing from his cave, and making apparently towards the river. "Though," added the speaker, "it is like to be some time ere he gets at, or rather into the river, which latter, from his demeanour, seems to be a probable casualty."

"He does, indeed," said Scymel, "appear to have been indulging somewhat freely in those enjoyments of which alone his nature is susceptible. I marvel what wind brings him hither."

"His course seems bent hitherward surely," said Faynton, "for he makes signs to the ferryman—the boat is even now crossing for him."

"It is much an he does not overset it—he would stand but a poor chance then," said the physician. His anticipations had nighly been verified, for Niel having with difficulty got into

the vessel, swayed to and fro as he sat, with so much vehemence, that the utmost skill of the waterman was requisite to prevent the boat from dislodging its freight, and sobering the drunkard by an immersion in the river. The landing was, however, effected at that part of the bank, where it sloped most gently to the water, and Jaggar, taking his course round the hall, approached reeling and staggering towards the spectators of his voyage.

Addressing himself to the physician, he stammered out a few unintelligible words, motioning him at the same time, to step apart from his companions. The physician complied.

"What canst thou want now, thou sottish horse leech?—thou hast not been backward in enjoying, if thou so termest it, thy lord's bounty. Speak if thou art able, for which I scarce give thee credit."

"Ware words, ware words, Master Doctor; you have your way, and—and I have mine," returned Jaggar. "I can bite as well as bark."

" Thy abilities either way are nought to me," replied Scymel, " but I will not spend time in listening to thy senseless jargon. An thou hast aught to say, say it ; if not, begone and disturb us not."

" Well then—I have seen him."

" Prestwyche ?"

" Aye, aye ; ha' ye not wit, wise Master Leech, to—to guess what I mean ? Him that should have been crow's meat by now, an somebody had—but what needs talking—him that yonder bungling imp of a pagan she devil—your fine handy Mahmood Bali, missed at seven yards, as he had been a sparrow's mark at seventy ; blind and dumb—a fit helper—ha, ha !"

None of this speech was lost upon the subject of it, who stood near to the speaker. He took no notice, but walking to the edge of the rock, seemed busily engaged in examining and trying with his foot the stability of a large portion of the stone, severed by a narrow fissure from the body of which it originally formed a

part. It hung over the waters, projecting beyond the level of the bank, but without any mark which, to an inexperienced eye, could suggest its instability. The motions of the Moor were unobserved.

Meanwhile Scymel continued his discourse with Jaggar, from whom he obtained the information, that Prestwyche had, within the last two hours, been seen by him, skirting one of the woody thickets, which at a distance of about half a mile from the hall were clustered together. More he knew not, for Prestwyche had disappeared instantly from his sight, and he had in vain sought to trace his footsteps.

The Moor had walked to some distance, when Jaggar, having finished his communication to the physician, was stumbling away. In passing the spot where Mahmood had lately stood, the dagger of the latter lying, as if accidentally dropped, on the edge of the precipice, struck Niel's sight. The hilt of the weapon studded with gold and enamelled, was a strong

temptation to the greedy covetousness of the wretch. He hesitated—looked cautiously around, and again eyed the glittering object. The owner was at a distance, and seemingly incapable, from his position, of beholding Jaggar's operations, and the physician and his companions were now engaged in conversation, and not likely to observe him, or if they did, it was but refunding the spoil. He stepped forward, and stretched out his hand to seize the weapon.

But ere his fingers had yet closed upon the object of temptation, the uncertain foundation of his footsteps, swayed by his weight from its precarious balance, was precipitated from its bed, and hurling along with it the unhappy Jaggar, was lost in the river, whose waters it cast around in high and foamy sheets.

The physician and his companions, attracted by the plunge of the stone, and missing Jaggar, hurried down the rude steps, that skirting a precipitous crag, to which some tradition had

assigned the name of the Fisherman's Rock, led to a narrow beach of sand, intervening between the bank and the waters of the stream. The first object that presented itself to their eyes, was the mangled and disfigured corpse of Niel Jaggar, the lower extremities of his frame immersed in the water, the rest extended on the sand. The dagger of the Moor lay by him. The physician took it up, with something like a smile, but without any remark to his companions. They drew the body from the water, and extended it on the beach.

" Did any one," inquired the priest, " observe him approach the station from whence he was so fatally thrown? What could induce him, even in the state in which he was, to venture so nigh the edge of the bank?"

" The inducement," replied Faynton, " I take to have been the hope of appropriating the weapon, which Master Scymel holds in his hand, and which I believe to be the property of Mahmood Bali who, it is like, lost it in depart-

ing from our neighbourhood. I have noted him to wear a similar one."

"It is Mahmood Bali's," said the physician, "and was doubtless the temptation which led to this termination. The hilt you will observe is highly ornamented."

"Unhappy wretch," said Wayword, as he contemplated the lifeless mass which lay at his feet, "who void of every good quality and feeling, and knowing no distinction of good and evil, hath found thy punishment in the indulgence of thy base passions. I tremble to think of his fate."

The physician raised his eyes slowly from the object on which they had been fixed, until their line of vision encountered the priest's. "His fate, say you, Master Wayword! what need of such inquiry? it lies before you, and may be read in the perishable clod on which corruption is already at work, tracing, though as yet invisibly, the characters of the decree. To redissolve into the elements—to return to the

worthless materials from whence he sprung, is the short chapter of the fate of the dead."

"I might think as you do," answered Wayword, "did the volume seem to me to close with the chapter you speak of. Such, indeed, as you have said, is the fate of the body, corruption is the last scene of its history. But the spirit which quickened and directed, decay cannot triumph over,—it rose not from the elements, nor will return to them."

"I know not," replied the physician, "that the spirit is independent of the bodily conformation; and if it exists in that, it will also cease with it. The brutes have it in common with us—surely they revive not to people the world of invisibles."

"The beasts, Master Scymel," answered Wayword, "have not the spirit we speak of; the spirit of existence may cease with the body it animates—the spirit that thinks, that reasons, and reflects, has a nobler term, unbounded as its own operations."

"Alas," said the physician, "what is this boasted reason of which you vaunt? What is this faculty which should give to man the semblance of a god?—where resident—essential or substantial—finite or infinite? and what are its operations?—Are they not weak, varying and uncertain as the course of the thistledown borne on the summer's breeze; the purposes of this minute overthrown by those of the next—the discoveries of to-day proved false by the reflections of the morrow. Seek for a being the most inconstant, most trifling, and absurd, and you shall find him in the possession of these noble powers, of this directing and eternal soul."

"That he is always so," returned the priest, "is an assertion unwarranted by fact; that he is ever so, let him thank his own pride and passions, that turn him from the paths of peace, in which virtue and humility would guide their followers. He has his free choice—if he has chosen amiss, whom shall he arraign save himself?"

"He hath his choice, say you," replied Scymel, "such choice as have the leaves carried down by the waters, or the ship when wrecked in the tempest. The child of chance, why should he be answerable, for that which he has neither skill to foresee, nor power, if seen, to avert?"

"That it is not so," said the priest, "every man's own consciousness can tell him, and reason and religion confirm the truth. But thou laughest at the one, and deniest the other."

"I do not deny thy religion," answered the sciolist, after a slight pause: "it may be true, though I believe it not. But of this I am satisfied, that I at least am that wave blown by the wind, that hath been driven by impulses not his own, that shall not rest but in that quiet sea, wherein I trust our being, with our sufferings, shall be together extinct."

"Wretched hope," exclaimed the priest, "that looks to annihilation for the only cure of those sufferings, to which humanity must of

need be subject. Bethink thee, Walter Scymel, can there be no better reliance than that? Cling whilst thou canst to a firmer, a more abiding prop; even from thy own words thou canst not be a loser. I grieve deeply that thou, with the time thou hast before thee, for thou art yet young, and with powers of no ordinary standard, shouldst be as the broken reed, or worthless bramble, rather than as the stately cedar of the forest. And I have noted when thou hast not marked me, that thine eye has glistened, thy cheek glowed, thy voice changed under the touch of kindly and noble feelings, such as I would fain believe are the natural attendants of thy spirit. Revive them again, be what thou oughtest to have been, what thou may'st yet be—free, generous, and noble in true nobility."

The physician delayed ere he replied. "I do believe, Wayward, thou meanest me well, albeit I cannot now profit by such intention. Thou hast read me not wholly wrong, better than

I deemed any might read me. There has been a time when—but 'tis idle to talk. The life that is before me is fixed; if as thou say'st man has a choice, I have chosen; whether ill or well, I care not—I am content."

"But futurity?"

"Speak not of it. He who hath felt and learnt to endure the hell within, need dread no other. Yet give me thy hand. I thank thee, Wayword; I do thank thee. Thou hast seen me more exposed than I would wish another should; but speak not of these things again—Farewell."

"Thou art fixed then—"

"As the rock," replied the physician, as he struck with his foot the impenetrable bank, by which they stood.

Any reply, had the priest intended to make such, was prevented by the approach of domestics from the hall, for the purpose of removing the body. They had been sent by Louis Faynton, who had left the disputants on the com-

mencement of the conversation. Scymel withdrew, the priest lingered a few moments to overlook the removal of the corpse, and give such directions as were needful.

As the physician approached the entrance of the garden, he was encountered by the Moor, who with his usual demeanour was slowly pacing to and fro, under the shade of a range of sycamores. On beholding the physician, Mahmood held out his hand to receive his dagger, which Scymel yet carried.

"Take thy dagger, it is a good weapon, and, like its master, can work more ways than one. Niel Jaggar hath found that."

The Moor grinned a smile, and depositing the weapon in its sheath, continued his exercise. The physician passed on. Turning abruptly at the termination of a straight garden walk, he came upon Chiverton and his guests, who were standing in the soft breezes of the now rapidly declining evening. He whispered, without stopping, a few words to Chiverton, who making a

hasty, though respectful excuse to his companions, followed the physician, and they entered the hall.

The Knight and his daughter lingered where Chiverton had left them. As the hour of separation approaches, the ties that bind together affectionate hearts are drawn closer, almost to painfulness, and the father and his child felt it so at that moment. Yet they felt in silence, for words do not constitute the language of sorrow, of that mild grief that is born not from the feeling of present calamity, but regret for former happiness. There were no exclamations of grief, no protestations; such would have been impertinent; but there was a light quiver of the lip as it essayed to smile, and the soft glance of the eye was dimmed by—one could not call it a tear, so slight apparently was the suffusing moisture. These were trifles; they sufficed, however, to communicate the feelings of the heart; more was not needed.

As they thus stood, absorbed in the thoughts

which the approaching events naturally gave birth to, and which were heightened by the influence of the hour that sank upon them, silent and deepening in shadows, the Knight's attention was arrested by a sudden whisper almost close to his ear.

"Dismiss your companion; I would speak with you alone," were the words.

The Knight looked hastily around. There was no one visible, but he thought he discerned behind an ancient elm that stood near, the shadow of a man faintly traced, as the rising moon began to dispel the gloom. He was doubtful, and feared to alarm Isabel by any attempt to inquire into the cause of this occurrence.

He had not stood long, ere the same voice, in a like suppressed tone, again addressed him.

"You have nothing to fear: but decide quickly."

The Knight again turned his eyes in the direction from whence the voice proceeded, and

this time he could clearly perceive the dark drapery of a figure almost entirely concealed by the intervening trunk of the elm. Who it was that acted thus mysteriously—what were his purposes, and whether it would be prudent to attend to the suggestion conveyed, were questions that naturally suggested themselves to Vancouver. But it was necessary, without their discussion, to come to some conclusion, and he determined upon satisfying his curiosity, as to the person and intent of the whisperer.

"Isabel, my child," said he, "the night damps are gathering, it were better you should retire to your apartment. I will accompany you thither, and return." He spoke in a tone calculated for the hearing of his secret neighbour.

"Return, Sir," replied his daughter, "whither? —shall I not be made happy with your society in the cedar-room, during——"

"No, my Isabel," returned the Knight, "I

have occupations with Sir John and *others*," laying a slight emphasis on the word, " which will detain me until my hour of rest."

He took his daughter's hand, and looked as he passed the elm towards the spot where the unknown had stood. But he had changed his position, so as to avoid being distinctly seen. After a brief absence the Knight returned.

" Now," he exclaimed, as he approached the elm, " what is thy will with me?"

The stranger stepped forward from his place of concealment. A large dark cloak enveloped his person in its folds, and the feather of his cap falling down, obscured his features effectually. He removed the plume, and turning to the Knight was instantly recognized by him.

" Master Reginald Prestwyche, if I mistake not; but why are you, who are reported far from the friend of Chiverton, thus secretly on his demesnes?"

" Let it suffice, Sir Gamelyn," returned the

youth, "that I am your friend; my present purpose is not with Sir John Chiverton."

"I do not know," said Vancouver, "why I should rely on your profession of friendship. But I would gladly know the object of this meeting."

"Follow me, and you shall know."

"Nay then, Master Prestwyche, I will wish you a good night. Were I as young as yourself, I might perhaps have vigour enough in my legs, and folly enough in my head, to take a moonlight ramble with you, at your request, and be content to ask wherefore at the end of it. But at my years, I have somewhat too little of either. And so I say again good night to you."

"Stay, Sir Gamelyn, you are too hasty. For your own sake—for the sake of the Lady Isabel, your—"

"How now, Sir," interrupted the Knight, "what of her, or how can aught between us, concern her?"

" It concerns her, and deeply," answered Prestwyche, " but I must not in prudence tarry here. If you desire to know more, and will trust to my word that no ill is intended you, come with me; if not I will return your good night, and trouble you no longer."

" I believe thee," said Vancouver, " to be a youth of gentle and honourable breeding. Promise me on the honour of a gentleman, that I shall be safe, and free to return, and I will accompany you."

" I do promise," replied Prestwyche; and wrapping his cloak more closely around him, and pulling down his cap at the same time, so as to shade as much as possible his countenance, he passed on towards a small postern in the garden-wall, which having opened, he emerged, along with his companion, into the open plain which lay before them, varied only by occasional clumps of wood. Taking advantage of these, in order, if possible, to escape observation, they

proceeded until the thickening clusters of trees impeded their direct progress.

Continuing the character of guide, Prestwyche entered a narrow defile, which the thick foliage on either side buried in almost total darkness. Winding down a rapid declivity, the path terminated in a rude bridge thrown across the waters of a small brook. Passing this, they forced their way through a tangled thicket of underwood and commingling branches; and these surmounted, they found themselves on a level spot of ground, not exceeding twelve yards in its longest diameter, from which the wood had been cleared. Three sides of this opening were sheltered by close and gigantic trees, mingled with shrubs, which filling up the interstices of the trunks, completed a natural curtain. The fourth was guarded by a rugged and almost perpendicular bank, against which leaned a structure so rude, as to raise an uncertainty whether it was intended for a human

habitation or not. Prestwyche knocked thrice at the door which guarded the entrance to this edifice.

"Who knocks?" inquired a feeble but harsh voice from within.

Two slight taps at the door seemed to convey an answer to this question, for a bolt was withdrawn, and an entrance offered to Prestwyche and his companion. The dim prospect of the interior was such as apparently to diminish the Knight's confidence. It accorded indeed with the exterior of the building, the turf and wooden walls of which were far from prepossessing. The glare of a small fire in the extremity of the narrow apartment rendered visible two figures; the one an old and withered female, who had officiated as portress, and the other a man of a middle age, and bearing the appearance of a domestic servant to some one of superior class. The furniture of the place seemed, in its fashion and value, to correspond with the habitation itself.

"You have nothing to fear," said Prestwyche, as his companion hesitated to proceed: "wretched as is this hovel, you will, I doubt not, approve my choice of a temporary habitation, when its reasons are known to you."

"I doubt not your assurance," replied the Knight, "strange as your lodging seems; and I were somewhat weaker than I deem myself, did I abandon a quest which has cost me such a wearisome ramble, now that we have, as I trust, arrived at its termination. I wait to follow you."

They entered, and crossing the apartment in which sat the two personages before mentioned, stood in front of another door, which seemed designed to open into some excavation in the rock, against which the hut leaned. This Prestwyche opened. A lamp was burning on a table in the room, to which the entrance was now before them. They proceeded; Prestwyche closed the door of the chamber, or rather cavern, and proceeded to acquaint

the Knight with the purport of his invitation, and with those circumstances relative to the situation of Chiverton and his sister, which as the reader is already aware of, it were needless to repeat.

CHAPTER V.

Miserable creature!
If thou persist in this, 'tis damnable—
Dost thou imagine thou can'st slide in blood
And not be tainted with a shameful fall?
Or like the black and melancholic yew tree,
Dost think to root thyself in dead men's graves,
And yet to prosper?

THE WHITE DEVIL.

IT was about noon of the next day, when the physician received a summons to attend Chiverton in the Maiden's Chamber.

The Knight addressed him as he entered the room. "I marvel to heaven," he exclaimed, "how it came to pass, that Mahmood Bali, who is wont to compass his ends with so much skill, should forget or lose his talent, when most needed. Had he taken the pains to aim

aright, this new plague, that threatens to overturn all my plans, had not occurred."

"I know," answered the physician, "from the words of Jaggar, a few moments before his calamity, that Prestwyche is, or lately was in the neighbourhood. Hath he attempted aught to your injury or annoyance?"

"Thou shalt hear, Walter," replied Chiverton. "I have just left yon old dotard, Vancouver. He has been at the pains to inform me, that this poor house of mine,—that is which I call mine,—with these lands of Chiverton, and everything appertaining thereunto, are in fact not mine, but my sister's."

"What follows?" asked Scymel.

"The consequence is easy," replied the Knight; "stripped of the holiday terms with which Vancouver gilds his pill, it stands thus—that he contracted to marry his daughter to the owner of Chiverton Hall—not to John Chiverton—a wandering Knight, carrying his inheritance on his back."

" And you conclude, that Prestwyche is the author of the Knight's information."

" I have it from Vancouver's lips that such is the source of his knowledge. The secret (for he did not acknowledge it,) I gleaned from some unguarded expressions, that dropped from him unconsciously."

" It is well," said Scymel; " and such being the case, I know not any reason we have to make a bugbear of this discovery, which, though untimely, may, I doubt not, be prevented from injuring, and, perhaps, be made the means of forwarding your plans."

" I know thee," replied the Knight, " skilful and foresighted beyond ordinary, and therefore suspect thee not of speaking at random. Yet, I perceive not, truly, how this end may be accomplished with the ease thou seem'st to expect."

" The means I purpose to use," answered the physician, " are simple. The Knight knows your sister is indisposed—he has reason to think seriously so."

" What of that ?"

" Of the nature of her complaint he knows nothing; its commencement, its progress, or probable termination."

" Well—well—this I know—to the point, good Scymel—thou tormentest me with riddles —for heaven's sake, man, speak out. What has, or can have, my sister's illness with our present topic ?"

" Much, Sir, and if well managed, will deliver us from this and all other difficulties on the same score."

" I would fain be enlightened on this subject, through which I can at present in no wise see my way."

" You are yourself, Sir, the next in succession to your sister. On her death, without offspring, the demesnes of Chiverton descend to you."

" How ?" exclaimed the Knight hastily, " what is your meaning ? By everything sacred, if thou dost, as I suspect—but no—no—thou canst not —darest not—insinuate aught so *damnable*."

"Sir," replied the physician, "I know not why you should thus mistake me. Your sister's malady being, as I have said, unknown to Sir Gamelyn, why should he not be induced to believe it mental, rather than physical; such as to preclude the possibility of her forming any connection to deprive you of these possessions, which during her life you will possess in her right, and afterwards as your own undoubted estates."

"The plan were good," answered Chiverton, "were it practicable. But how will Vancouver be induced to believe this new tale?"

"That," said Scymel, "will, with your approbation, be my business, in which I doubt not of success. The expressions which were used yesterday in detailing to him and his daughter, your sister's indisposition, were fortunately indefinite enough to bear without straining the sense most expedient to be given them. That you did not disclose these circumstances before, may be accounted for from a natural delicacy as

to the situation of the Lady Ellice. Prestwyche, too, must be secured, and if, as is probable, further interviews are contemplated between him and Vancouver, his non-appearance will weaken the confidence the Knight seems to have reposed in his representations."

"Aye," replied Chiverton, "do thou converse with Vancouver; none can better than thou give a plausible colouring to whatever tale thou choosest to tell. But stay—he must ere long discover the fallacy of thy account—what will ensue on such discovery?—how shall that certainty be guarded against?"

"It will then," answered the physician, "be too late for his objections—the seal will then be set—the ties drawn to knots, which he cannot loose. But why, Sir, anticipate difficulties? He who, without weaknesses to delay, or prejudices to distract his schemes, moves on through every accident in one unshaken course, will always trample under his foot the unlooked-for

brambles that impede the progress of the fearful and wavering."

"I know, Walter," returned the Knight, "that thou fearest nothing. I think thou canst not waver in thy designs. Thy means, like thine ends, are, to me at least, strangely unintelligible. But go, and however thou actest in this affair, I will not doubt the path thou hast selected is the best. I am over anxious in this business—it wearies me to distraction."

"I will then leave you," said Scymel; "I trust on returning, to be the messenger of welcome tidings."

"I would it might be so," answered Chiverton, as Scymel left the apartment and proceeded on the object of his mission.

Addressing himself to the apartment in which Vancouver and his daughter sat, he knocked at the door, which was opened by the Knight himself. His countenance was troubled, and had lost the free and open expression that usually

marked it. But he received the physician in his accustomed frank manner.

" Good Master Scymel, I beseech you enter —thanks to the occasion, whatever it may be, that has procured us this pleasure."

" Your goodness, Sir Gamelyn, is flattering— and yet I must trespass upon it. Might I, without greatly interrupting your better occupations, request the favour of half an hour's converse. The nook I call my study is unoccupied :—if it please you we will retire thither."

" Willingly, good Sir, most willingly. But stay—aye, that will be better. Isabel, my love, go to your chamber a while—Master Scymel and I have some trifling business in hand."

The physician bowed reverently as the Lady passed him in quitting the apartment. She returned his mute salutation with native dignity and sweetness. Scymel gazed after her a moment, and turning towards the Knight, walked with him to the upper end of the room.

" You, doubtless, divine, Sir Gamelyn, the

cause of my present intrusion ?" said the physician.

" It were an untruth," answered the Knight, " were I to deny that I have some forethought of the subject of which you would speak. Yet I would, if you object not, rather listen to your explanation, than trust to any uncertain surmises I may myself have formed."

" Even as you please, Sir Gamelyn. I meant not to affect any thing of disguise; my object requires it not. I am informed by Sir John Chiverton, that he has this afternoon passed some time in company with his valued guests. Will Sir Gamelyn de Vancouver allow a humble admirer of the character of both those guests, to express the regret he sorely feels, that any cloud should have obscured the progress of a connection, that promised to be equally the source of happiness to all parties ?"

" I thank you, Master Scymel—I doubt not your good wishes. Sir John and I parted not long ago—he departed, as it seemed in unwonted

haste, and without so long delay as to make reply to certain queries, which I addressed to him, and momentous enough in my estimation to deserve some answer."

"Of this I was aware, Sir Gamelyn, when I sought you. Let me entreat that the circumstances to which you have alluded, may make not unfavourable impression on your mind. The explanation I have to offer, will I trust both dispel your doubts, and satisfy you that he who now addresses you can with more propriety make that explanation, than Chiverton himself could have done."

"I shall with pleasure listen—I would not wish that trifles should break off a business thus far proceeded in, and which in truth I have dwelt on with some foolish pleasure."

"I will then," said the physician, "essay to clear away this unfortunate misunderstanding. You made inquiries, yesterday, after the health of the Lady Ellice."

"I remember, Master Scymel."

"It was not, at that time, thought necessary to explain the nature of her malady. But you must now be made aware, that she suffers under the united oppression of bodily and mental calamity. A violent fright, incurred in the early part of her life, produced an impression on her imagination, which heightened by subsequent mismanagement, has at times arisen into decided, though temporary fits of insanity. Under one of these she now labours."

"Still, Master Scymel, these things, which for the unhappy lady's sake, I grieve deeply to hear, do not, as I perceive, immediately affect the question between Sir John Chiverton and myself."

"You speak, Sir Gamelyn, as I apprehend, of the claims of the Lady Ellice to this estate. These claims Sir John is far from disputing. If in aught he gives too free scope to the sway of his affections, it is in love to his sister. But the Lady Ellice is, from her malady, incapable of taking into her hands the government of the

domains of Chiverton, even were she wishful of it; so far from which, she has, in her intervals of reason, repeatedly requested her brother to receive, as a gift from her, the possessions which to her are useless. This he has ever refused to do."

"Still, Master Scymel, you have not said, that Sir John has himself any claim to the possessions he holds."

"I have not, Sir Gamelyn, nor does he pretend such. Some interest in them he has, the exact nature of which I know not—the main portion is indisputably the Lady Ellice's. But, bethink you, Sir; on the death of Ellice, without offspring, these lands are rightfully her brother's; so settled. Now, as marriage is with her out of question, may not Chiverton be considered as possessing in fact that which the future is certain to give him?"

"This, Master Scymel, I comprehend, and will consider your words, which appear to me to have weight. But why was not this told before?

I hate secrecy as I hate Satan. Why could he not openly, and plainly, have told me this ere I came here? Surely I was entitled to know it. And yet had the information not come to me from another quarter, I have no reason to think one word of explanation would have been given."

"Yet such explanation was assuredly intended. And ask yourself, Sir Gamelyn, whether, dearly as Chiverton values his sister, and with his family pride, could he be eager to confess, even to yourself, the situation of Ellice? Even in this house, Chiverton, myself, and her own immediate attendants are alone acquainted with the extent of her calamity."

"I confide in your words, Master Scymel. But, yet, is there not some youth, a lover of the Lady Ellice?—I bethink me, I have heard such rumour. How has this been concealed from him?"

"I grieve, Sir Gamelyn, to say it is so: this has been the fatal cause of great aggravation of

her disorder. In one of those intervals of unshaded reason, which she yet at times enjoys, she saw Reginald Prestwyche. He had, indeed, known her in earlier years, but a quarrel between him and Chiverton had long interrupted their acquaintance; nor was it until this later meeting that any peculiar affection existed, or at least was manifested between them."

"And of what disposition is the youth—he is, I think, of gentle extraction?"

"He is; and report speaks him brave and well possessed of all becoming acquirements. But he is a rash, hotheaded, and romantic dreamer: one that runs into danger for the sake of extricating himself; trusting to his foolish valour in exclusion of his judgment, and listening to explanation only when the mischief done is irreparable. Yet, by one of those contradictions of which our strange nature affords so many instances, he can at times assume the appearance of coolness and deliberation, and has, in fact, a sort of mad sagacity, which enables him to come

safely through adventures, which better men would have failed in, and wiser men would have left untried."

The physician had mingled in his account of Prestwyche, so much that he knew would tally with the Knight's own knowledge, if he had, indeed, had much converse with the youth, that Vancouver readily believed the falsehoods which were thus mingled with truth; and gave Prestwyche credit for all the rashness and impatient folly with which Scymel had charged him.

Besides, the desire which the old Knight entertained of completing the intended union, disposed him to listen with easy ears to any statement tending to obviate difficulties in the way of the event. The physician was not slow at perceiving the favourable turn of Vancouver's thoughts.

"Your kindness, Sir Gamelyn," said he, "will excuse the imperfect manner of my narration; the import of its matter you apprehend, as I perceive. Shall I be allowed to acquaint

Sir John, that the threatened obstacle to our views no longer exists?"

"Do so, good Master Scymel," said the Knight, "or stay—aye—let me consider what you have said—but it matters not—and will you add, that I will myself wait upon him some hour hence, if so suit his leisure?"

"I will so bear your message, Sir Gamelyn," replied the physician, "and rejoice in the performance of the office."

"Thanks, Master Scymel, thanks," said Vancouver; and the physician left the apartments.

"Thanks, truly," said he as he passed the gallery, "to nature that made yon hasty Knight, alike easy in adopting and rejecting his belief. But now dispatch must be had, the weathercock that one breeze has turned favourably to our wishes, the next wind may render more adverse than before. And now to Chiverton—but stay—what voices are those—Janet's?—aye, that I recognise; but the other?"

The conversation which had arrested Scymel's

attention proceeded from the extremity of a narrow passage, branching off from the entrance hall, into the part of the court immediately adjacent to the offices, and other parts of the mansion, appropriated to the domestics. Along this avenue the physician directed his steps, and sheltered by a sudden angle became at once master of the dialogue.

"So Master Priest, you are sure is not in the house?" said one of the speakers, whom Scymel knew from the tone to be a stranger to Chiverton Hall.

"No—no—no," replied Ellice's waiting woman, tight Mrs. Janet, "how often I pray you, Master Gilbert, am I to repeat my answer? Master Wayword is gone, worthy man that he is, to see that ill-chanced Niel Jaggar that broke his neck off the ugly rock yonder;—to see him, I say, buried like a Christian, which I take it, Master Gilbert, is more than such a heathen Pagan, (for you must know he was the rudest, most——")

"I crave your pardon, beautiful Mrs. Janet," answered the other, "but time presses, and this business being, as you know, of the highest importance——"

"Bless me, Master Gilbert, but you're mighty quick—my stars, don't I know what is of importance, and what——"

"No doubt—no doubt, *dear* Mrs. Janet; no doubt of it at all. But to be brief, for the sun is near setting—you say he will return within a half hour?"

"That he will—you are never satisfied—he waits on my lady by that time, at her especial appointment. And so——"

"And so, lovely Janet, I will commend this letter unto your most fair hands, nothing doubting but your prudent fidelity will convey it unto Master Wayword on the instant of his return; the business being as I said——"

"Hold your tongue, and give me the letter—surely I have not been principal waiting maid and chief counsellor, as I may say, to my lady

for these ten years, and need be schooled to carry a letter at my time; not that my age is——"

"Your age is enchanting, like your sweet self; and here—take the letter—and—let me whisper you a word."

"There's no one to hear, Master Gilbert."

"Nor to see either, I suppose Mrs. Janet—and so—your lips are perfect honey-combs."

"An impudent varlet," exclaimed the glowing waiting lady, as the ravisher ran off, "an he were here, I would comb him like—but I must away; Master Wayword will be here anon, and —Bless me, Master Scymel—I cry your pardon, but you startled me so."

"Give me the letter, Janet."

"What letter would your worship have? I have none but a small trifle that——"

The physician, interrupted her, by taking from her hand the letter he required.

"Go to your own room," said he.—"Misseltoe."

The steward appeared.

" Janet is gone to her room—it were well she leave it not until further orders. If any inquire after her, she has left the hall on an errand for the Lady Isabel. And see that no one but thyself approach her.

A low obeisance testified the steward's compliance. When he had departed, the physician read the letter, and immediately sought Chiverton.

He found him in the maiden's chamber. " What," asked the Knight, " is the result of thy conference with our guest ?"

" As favourable, Sir, as may be. Sir Gamelyn purports within an hour to certify so much to you by word of mouth."

" It is well—exceeding well. But what hast thou there ?"

" A trifling piece of correspondence, which a lucky accident made me the owner of. What think you, Sir, of the contents ?"

" Ha—escape to-night—the plot ready, and

to be executed within—why, 'tis not two hours —that villain priest—how has this been done? how has Ellice been persuaded to consent to this most foolish scheme?"

"Undoubtedly, by the entreaties of Prestwyche; conveyed through, and seconded by Wayword. But it is needful to act. The priest will return presently—Mahmood will meet him, with such assistant as he may choose; and for the present, one of the lower chambers of the hall may be the limit of his wanderings. And, Mahmood, let him not suspect by whom he is seized, nor whither he is conveyed—thou knowest how to blindfold, and remember dispatch and secrecy."

"Do so, Mahmood—and now, Scymel, I deem we are well able to counteract this design; yet so sudden—I expected not such. Their numbers are nothing.—Prestwyche—his man—and some simple hind, whom it seems they have entangled in this plot. It appears not whether the saintly

Wayword is to be the companion of their flight. And would it, thinkest thou, be well to acquaint Sir Gamelyn of this business?"

"Assuredly, Sir, it will confirm his belief in the mental indisposition of the lady. It were not amiss that he should be a spectator of the scene. He will be here ere long; you can then make known these things to him. And could you arrange with him an early time for your marriage —to-morrow or the day after, our anxieties on that head might be speedily terminated."

"I will endeavour to do so much. Yet, Walter, I grieve for my sister. The sacrifice of her hopes—her happiness I much fear, pains me as—I would almost that I could draw back from these paths—I know not whither they may lead."

"It is now, Sir, too late," replied the physician. "And truly, I see not what end should be answered by so fickle a procedure, unless it be your pleasure to forthwith dismiss your guests, give your sister to Prestwyche, resign

the possessions you hold, and submit yourself to your kind brother-in-law's consideration, to vouchsafe to you needful food and cloathing. I crave your pardon, Sir— I mean not to offend, but such appears to me the only result of checking your career."

" I believe thee—I believe thee," returned the Knight, while his countenance rose and fell in rapid vicissitude, under the influence of the emotions which the physician had called into play ; " yet, tempt me not again by speaking thus. I have hopes, aye, and lofty ones, as *thou* knowest, Scymel—wealth, rank, and power, I would have mine, and I have pride to stock a nation of nobles. Yet, Walter Scymel," he grasped the physician's arm as he spoke—" I would crawl a beggar on the dust of the earth, and ask for alms from the slave of a serving groom.—I would do this, and thank the fate that had damned me to so doing, ere I would see Ellice Chiverton the wife of Reginald Prestwyche."

" Then, Sir," said Scymel, " there is but one course before you."

" I will pursue it," answered the Knight, " whatever it be, and whithersoever it conducts me. I want not daring. And yet I envy thee the composure with which thou canst contemplate any means that tend to the accomplishing of thy purposes."

" Sir," replied the physician, " that which you speak of is but the natural temperament of a mind taught by suffering and disappointment, the true value of those trifling and imaginary distinctions, the baubles with which men amuse and torture themselves. Whatever conduces to the end in view is expedient, and what is expedient with me is right."

" I doubt not," answered the Knight, after a brief pause, " I doubt not thy fidelity to me. Yet how can I be assured, that, holding the principles thou professest, thou wilt continue faithful to my interest ?"

" Because, Sir John," returned Scymel, " I

have no motive to be otherwise. I have no passions—no desires; none at least that can be worked upon by human offers. My wants are few, and are here amply supplied; were they not, I have taught them to be the slaves, not the masters of my will."

"Thou art strangely inscrutable, Walter," answered the Knight; "but I will continue to trust thee—thou hast ever hitherto been found worthy. How soon said'st thou, will Sir Gamelyn be here?"

"In brief time, doubtless, Sir; stay, I hear his footstep—I will leave you, Sir, and prepare for this approaching encounter. Were it not well to admit Faynton to our counsels? he is discreet, and our numbers will not be great."

"Thou say'st right—initiate him into what may be needful, or I will myself do so, and will then join thee in the garden. Here comes Sir Gamelyn, if I mistake not."

A knock at the door of the apartment intimated some one's presence.

The physician opened it, and admitting Vancouver, withdrew himself. He entered the garden, which was solitary.

"It is well," said he, "that none of these roysterers are about—men of arm without head, whose presence at this juncture were not desirable. The evening advances, and our time of action is not far distant."

As the physician had said, the close of the day was not far distant, and became every instant more evident, as the glow continued to deepen in the western sky, and the light veil of the rising mist hung over the landscape, and floated on the surface of the river.

Scymel leaned against the trunk of a gigantic elm, whose ambitious arms flung a deep shadow over the waters, and was lost in deep reverie.

"The issue," said he inwardly, "of my experiment is near. I shall see how far, by pursuing a fixed course, by yielding to no obstacles, and what is more, to no fears, that success may be

attained, which I have bitterly learnt the fabled virtue of bigots and fools cannot ensure. Chiverton begins to waver—he must and shall persevere. I wonder not altogether at him; at times I seem to myself less firm than I would be. But the infirmity of nature shall be repressed—Chiverton shall be the husband of Isabel Vancouver. The object is fixed, the means I will teach him not to start at. And yet he talks of his boldness, his pride, his passions! I know enough of the contemptible delusions in which the self-love of men enwraps them, else I could laugh till the echoes should join me in my scorn of such mockery. Who comes there?—Mahmood Bali—'tis well."

The Moor approached him as he spoke.

"Thou hast fulfilled thy mission by the amiable smile thy countenance bears. Is he safe, and ignorant to whom he owes his present agreeable lodging?

Mahmood nodded an affirmative.

"And thou hast bestowed him—where?"

The Moor stamped with his foot, and pointed downwards.

"So—I did believe thou had'st a kind feeling towards the reverend man, and truly thou hast shewn it. He will at least not want company in the cool bower to which thou hast introduced him. The bats and the toads may benefit by his exhortation. And yet I would he had been better accommodated. But it is now too late, the last gleam is gone—it darkens rapidly. What mean thy gestures?"

The Moor pointed to the window of Ellice's chamber, which looked to the river, and then to a small thicket of underwood, and stunted shrubs that grew beneath it.

"Ha!' exclaimed Scymel, "so near,—are there more than one?"

Mahmood shook his head.

"Yet his followers cannot be far distant—I would we knew——"

He was interrupted by the Moor, who directed

his attention to the overhanging brow of a rock projecting beneath the thicket, and at a distance of some yards from the station which the Moor had signified to be occupied by Prestwyche. At the same time he counted two on his fingers.

"Thou hast not been negligent, Mahmood," said the physician: "be as well in acting as in observing, and we need not fear. Fetch hither the men who conducted Wayword, and apprehend yon followers in their lurking place."

Mahmood had no sooner departed, than the physician was joined by Faynton and Sir Gamelyn, who issued together from the main entrance of the hall.

"This is a strange affair, Master Scymel," said Sir Gamelyn.

"It is," replied the physician, "and will expound more clearly than aught I could say, the nature of Prestwyche's views, in taking so deep concern in the interest of this unhappy lady. These secret proceedings betoken—but remarks

are needless, your credit for experience, Sir Gamelyn, forbids."

"Stay, look there," interrupted Faynton, and he pointed to the window of Ellice's sleeping chamber.

The speakers were so situated as to be effectually shrouded from view, themselves possessing at the same time the power of observing whatever passed. The casement to which Faynton had directed their looks, was swung open, and what appeared through the gloom to be a female arm, was projected, seemingly as a signal to those below. A low whistle answered this motion, and the arm was hastily withdrawn.

"What now?" whispered Sir Gamelyn, "how is she to descend?"

"Hush," replied Scymel, "they have taken alarm,—be still—where is Mahmood? he inwardly continued: "if he should disturb them; but he is apt and cautious."

The casement was again opened, and it

seemed from the slight noise that succeeded, that something was thrown down. There was heard, too, a cautious rustling in the thicket.

"It is a ladder of ropes they are fastening," said Faynton, "let us approach."

They began accordingly to move slowly and silently towards the thicket. Ere they had, however, half way arrived thither, a female figure issued from the casement, and descended the ladder. She was followed by another; but ere she arrived at the ground, the creak of a door was heard.

"That," exclaimed the physician, "is Chiverton's private door; it opens on the spot; they will meet assuredly; hasten on."

They sprung onwards, and the words of Scymel were instantly confirmed, for the second female dropped with a loud shriek from the ladder, and the instantaneous clash of swords, told that Chiverton and his foe had met in fierce strife. In a moment more, the physician and his companions were on the spot.

They had met at the point where the rock intervening between the hall and the river, dwindled to a mere footpath, along which one person alone, could with difficulty pass. From the very brink of this precipice, the trunk of a twisted sycamore sprung almost horizontally. Planting one foot on this, whilst the other was fixed to the rock, and clinging with his left arm to a branch of the tree, Prestwyche now warded and now returned the fierce and rapid lunges, which Chiverton, impelled by the pulsations of intense hatred, aimed against him. Interference was in vain; had any one chosen to incur Chiverton's indignation, by coming between him and his enemy, the nature of the place seemed to prohibit the approach of a third person.

It was evident that Prestwyche was willing only to stand on the defensive, and it was only when driven to necessity by the hot attack of his opponent, and by the disadvantages of his situation, that he aimed any decided strokes

against Chiverton. On equal ground, the coolness of the former joined to his skill, would doubtless have triumphed over the impetuosity of the Knight, despite of his superior knowledge of his weapon, an acquirement with which Chiverton was with justice not a little proud. But fettered as was Prestwyche to one spot, unable to change for a moment the precarious and fatiguing situation he held, the odds he had to contend with were too disproportionate. Accordingly after a rapid exchange of thrusts, in which slight wounds given and received, served only to excite the rage of the combatants, Prestwyche, in endeavouring to plant a severe hit in an unguarded point, missed his footing, stumbled, and at the same instant received the weapon of his antagonist in his breast. He fell backwards, and would have been lost in the waters, or dashed on the rock beneath, had no support intervened.

But an outstretched arm caught and preserved him. One of his followers, who had

scrambled in an oblique course up the rugged face of the rock, had gained at the moment of Prestwyche's fall, the point at which he was able to aid his master. Placing him securely among the irregular branches of the sycamore, he sprung forward towards Chiverton, who was about to raise his sister, whom a happy insensibility had prevented from seeing or knowing her lover's fate. The violence of this new attack, unexpected, too, by Chiverton, was such that the Knight was thrown to the ground, and another moment had probably settled his fate, when the sudden flash and report of an arquebuss from beneath, announced the doom which arrested the uplifted hand of the man. The sword dropped innocent from his nerveless grasp, and he himself rolled over the precipice, and fell lifeless on the beach.

Mahmood and his followers had come in good time for their lord, and they hastened to secure Prestwyche. "Bear him to his lodging," whispered the physician to the Moor: "thou

wert better conduct him through the entrance in the rock yonder; and—dost thou hear?—let Wayword be removed to a somewhat more kindly abode. Use Prestwyche gently—I will follow thee presently, and examine his hurts."

The stairs, which have been already mentioned as winding down the face of the rock, terminated on a broad ledge, the further extremity of which projected beneath the mouth of the cave, and this opening communicated with a range of vaults extending beneath the hall. The construction of these was said to have been prior to the erection of the mansion itself, for what purpose was unknown; but the massive arches, strong doors, and strange relics which struck the explorers of these regions, had given birth to divers wild traditions and stories of terror, which the successive domestics of the hall had not failed assiduously to hand down, from one generation to another. Into one of these hideous recesses was the unfortunate Prestwyche conducted through the

opening in the rock, as affording a more secret path than the entrance from the hall.

Meanwhile, the remaining members of Chiverton's party were hastily endeavouring to recall Ellice from the insensibility into which she had fallen. With difficulty they succeeded; her eyes opened, but closed with a slight shudder as they fell upon her brother.

"I will pray you, gentlemen, to retire a few paces. I know her mood, she will change presently." His companions accordingly withdrew a few yards, though not so far but that, through the uncertain light that prevailed, they could mark what passed between Chiverton and his sister.

"A most unhappy chance," said Vancouver, "as I live a most unhappy chance this. So young, so beautiful, and good, and to be thus afflicted. You feel for her, gentlemen?"

"Assuredly," replied Faynton; "think you, Sir Gamelyn, that any can fail so to do?"

"A—well," answered Vancouver, "I doubt

you not—but had you been a father, Master Faynton, as I am—and of an only child—for such is mine; the fond, the only tie that binds an old man to the earth, you would feel more bitterly the calamity, which he might think that some unblest chance might cast upon his own treasure." The good old man paused, and was for some minutes engrossed by the thoughts that had risen within him.

For a short time, Chiverton vainly addressed his professions of kindness and affection to the unhappy girl, whom he held in his arms. Yet her fears at length subsided, and the spectators beheld her cast her arms around her brother's neck, with all the eager confidence of a sister, while the sobs that burst from her were heard at that distance, as she poured forth her anguish in a flood of affectionate tears.

"You observe," said the physician, addressing himself to Vancouver, "you observe in her that mutability, which is ever the attendant of the complaint under which she most unhappily

labours. But now, trembling at her brother's presence, and now again throwing her whole heart before him. So it is in this malady—the diseased mind, fraught with unnatural susceptibility, loses as quickly as it receives its impression ; yielding, like the waters of the river, to the influence of the slightest object, and like them retaining no vestige of the cause that for a moment awakened their circling surface."

" I perceive it—I perceive it," returned the old Knight, " alas, that I should ! But were it not better that she should be taken into the house—these night damps—I feel them myself—will little suit her weakened frame. Yet, I cry your mercy, Master Scymel, my memory played me the rogue, when I presumed to advise the lady's physician."

" It matters not—you say rightly—it will be better she go in. We will speak to Chiverton."

The physician accordingly approached with Vancouver to Chiverton, and after a brief dis-

course, they entered the hall, bearing with them the unhappy Ellice.

"I know not," thought Faynton, who remained, "what this may mean—'tis strange I heard not before of this madness, if such there be, which in truth I do not overmuch credit. For my part, I will stir no further in it, without further information—an I do, nail me to a barn door to scare away the kites."

CHAPTER VI.

THE VAULTS.

Bosola.—Other sins only speak—murder shrieks out.
The element of water moistens the earth,
But blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens.
Fer.—Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young.
WEBSTER.

It was about an hour after Ellice had been conveyed to her chamber, when one of her attendants hastily entered the room. Ellice started from the bed on which she had thrown herself, in that heartless stupefaction, which so often succeeds violent sorrow, and which blunting for a while the edge of calamity, hangs a leaden weight on the heart, and throws a palsy over at once its hopes and its terrors.

"Who comes there?"

"Oh—madam," the panting handmaiden stayed for breath.

"How now, Beatrice—what mean you?"

"Alas, madam—Master Prestwyche."

"For heaven's sake, speak quickly—what of him—he is dead—aye—thy voice—thy look—"

"No, my lady, indeed, no—he is not dead, but——"

"Not dead, but—but what?"

"Those hideous—terrible vaults—they have confined him there."

"Thank heaven, if that be all, a remedy may be found. Knowest thou in what vault they have placed him?"

"Yes, madam—'tis Soy Higginson told me, and he was one that took him—and he made me promise to tell no——"

"Well—well—Beatrice, heed not what he said; what vault—what vault I ask thee, wench?"

"Dear my Lady, I don't know, but that Soy says it's under the great elm in the garden, and

that it's deep down—oh, such a frightful place, my Lady!—they took him by an opening in the rock that looks to the river."

"To the river—ah!—Beatrice, what is't o'clock?"

"'Tis past nine, my Lady."

"Where is my brother?—cruel brother," added Ellice, and she sighed a comment on the epithet—"and so soon to change from what he was—so kind he was wont to be."

"He is with Sir Gamelyn and Master Scymel."

"Well—well: raise the tapestry in that corner, Beatrice, and look an thou canst find a bunch of keys."

Ellice advanced to the casement of her chamber. The moon was up, and beaming on the river.

"I have loved thee, thou fair moon:—yet, I would thou hadst slept to-night. It may be I shall not see thee again—thou wilt shine on the flowers that shall bloom on my grave—Alas! she

may well claim flowers when dead, for whom no garland blooms whilst living. Hast thou found the keys, Beatrice ?"

" I have them here, madam—they are terribly rusty."

" Dost thou think, Beatrice, thou darest go through the vaults ?"

" The vaults, my lady ! St. Mary bless me !—go into the vaults, where nobody dare go, even in the day, except that Mahmood Bali, and some of those ruffian fellows that can meet nought as bad as themselves—at night, and alone—and——"

" No, Beatrice, no," replied Ellice with a faint smile, " not alone, but yet with no better companionship than I can afford."

" Worse and worse, my lady !—you go there! you must not, indeed you must not; why, they say the place is haunted, and I don't know what, and—but, indeed, my lady, pardon me, but you shall not go."

" Well, well, Beatrice, be quiet—we will not

go—and now leave me, my good girl, and if thou hearest more let me know."

"Surely, my lady."

"Stay—knowest thou where Janet is?"

"Old Misseltoe, the steward, said even now, that she was employed on some errand for the lady—Sir Gamelyn's daughter."

"Enough: thou may'st go—'tis a strange time too for her to be absent—I must then perform my purpose alone. Heaven grant me aid!"

Ellice bolted the door of her chamber, cast an anxious glance around, and took up the ponderous keys. Her hand trembled, and a faint shudder for a moment passed over her frame.

"How is this," thought she, "that my boasted resolution should thus fail me in the hour of trial, when I have most need of support—thus trifling—thus weak beyond a woman's weakness. Beyond a *woman's* weakness! oh, how many of my sex have endured, without a

sigh or a tear, the worst realities of evil; have suffered and died for those they loved; and shall Ellice Chiverton start from encountering a dark cellar, for him who has risked—good heaven, it may be, has *lost* his life for her sake—ungrateful girl! even now the last blood of life—now heaven protect me!"

She took from an open cabinet a small box, and snatching up the keys and a lamp, pushed aside a part of the arras, the removal of which disclosed a narrow door. It yielded to her hand, and she passed rapidly down a long and steep flight of stairs. They terminated in a narrow quadrangle, from which external light was wholly excluded. There was a door in one of the walls, and Ellice was examining the keys, when she perceived the passage was open. The door had decayed and dropped from its hinges, and leaned against the wall obliquely, leaving a sufficient space for her passing. She glided through the opening, and entered the adjoining vault.

It was lofty and spacious. A massive pillar, rising in the centre of the place, met and supported the arched and groined roof, the nitrous exudations from which hung in dripping and glittering stalactites. To the pillar were affixed iron staples, from some of which hung chains, and the stone itself, carved with many initials, presented a melancholy record of the lingering occupations of suffering wretches. Subsequently, the place seemed to have been destined to kindlier purposes, for along one side were ranged huge barrels, once full with liquid hoards, but now broken and decayed. No trace could be detected, from which it might be inferred, that human footsteps had there interrupted the solitude of long years.

Ellice paused and listened. The strength and closeness of the masonry seemed impervious to sounds from the mansion above, and in the dismal chamber itself the ear met no noise, save the monotony of the condensed damp that streamed down the walls, and splashed in heavy

drops from the roof. She sought an outlet and was not long in discovering a door, the lock of which yielded with difficulty to one of the keys she bore. She passed to the next chamber, the next, and the next. They differed little from the first. The same massive and gloomy architecture, the same appearance of desolation, and the same cold and dripping dews were found in each. On leaving the last of these, Ellice found herself in a low passage. It was hewn in the rock, and she was aware that she had passed from under the limits of the hall, and that the place of her destination was near. Through a crevice of the rock she heard the sullen noise of the waters as the river rolled by. She hastened on till her progress was interrupted by another door. She stopped, her heart throbbed violently —her wearied limbs trembled beneath her, and the doubting anxiety that filled her breast, nigh deprived her of the power of motion.

She recovered from the agitation that possessed her, and knocked at the door. No an-

swer was returned. A dull reverberation along the passage, the voice of the awakened echoes, alone replied. She repeated the knock again and again, and heard again the hollow answer of the echo. Other sound there was none.

" He speaks not," said Ellice inwardly, " he will speak no more. His heart is cold, and mine, I feel, will not long survive. Yet, the last tribute of affection, Ellice Chiverton may yet pay. I will visit his cold corse, and take a last look of him, who has loved but too well for himself and me. And then—I would that the same fate might reach me too: that stretched by his, my lifeless form might attest the depth of a woman's suffering, of a woman's love."

It was long ere the lock of the prison door yielded to the key which Ellice applied to it. At length it opened; she stepped on firmly, for in the belief of *his* death, calamity had done its worst. There is a degree of sorrow, when it ceases to indicate itself by the outward and visible sign, and such was hers. No shudder,

no tear, not the shaking of the hand, or the light quiver of the lip had betrayed, had there been any to watch, the inward working of the spirit.

The gloomy chamber into which Ellice entered, bore a near resemblance to those she had already traversed. The damp exhalations with which it was filled, obscured the light of the lamp, whose glimmering light hardly sufficed to direct her to a corner of the dungeon, where, stretched on a heap of straw, she discerned a figure, apparently lifeless. Her breathing stayed—her feet seemed rooted to the ground. With a violent effort she sprung forward—dropped on her knees by the side of the motionless form. "It *is* he, he lives—holy Virgin, he lives!"

The object of her hasty exclamations, aroused by them from the faint slumber in which he had been wrapped, started from his wretched couch, and cast his awakened eyes on the form of pale beauty that knelt by him.

"My dream, yet here! and am I not awake

—'tis even more distinct—speak, I adjure thee? what art thou, that hauntest thus my sleeping and waking hours in that semblance?"

"And dost thou ask, who I am, Reginald?—am I so far forgotten in one brief hour?—for surely 'tis not more since we parted. But thou wert wounded, and——"

"Speak to me not of wounds—of hurts—I know none—I feel none, while thou art here. But say, how camest thou hither?—has cruelty dared—but no, it could not—thou art not imprisoned in these dreary vaults?"

"Think not so harshly, Reginald;—but thy wounds—thy wounds? I must e'en, for want of a better, be thy leech; and wilt thou dispute with thy physician?"

She prevented his reply, and opening the box she had brought with her, took thence the materials of her simple surgery. She bound up her lover's hurts, none of which were of much import, for Ellice, like many of the ladies of her time, whose residence was solitary and remote

from the conveniences of a populous town, had acquired a practical skill in an art, in which few females of this day would desire to be versed; and though the arrival of Scymel at the hall had abridged her sphere of practice in the art chirurgical, she had continued to minister aid to the sufferings of the females of the mansion, and the few and humble tenants of the soil who dwelt in the vicinity of Chiverton Hall, and who found in her gentle and winning kindness, that balm, which all the contents of the physician's laboratory had failed to furnish.

She sprung from her kneeling posture as she completed her labours. Prestwyche, too, arose from the wretched couch on which he lay.

"Your hurts," said she "will not now prevent your gaining a hamlet, that lies west of this place—some two miles hence. Clinage they call the place."

"I know it well, but—"

"Stay a moment; you will there find an old man, Bennet Walters. Shew him this ring, he

will furnish you with a horse, and whatever you need."

"But whereunto, my Ellice, tends your kindness? To what purpose were it to me to have at command a king's stud, unless this gem had magic powers, and could bid the iron bolts fly back, and leave open my passage from this dungeon?"

"The ring cannot do this, but I can." She raised the keys from the ground where she had laid them. "Here are the means of liberty—in a moment you shall be free."

She moved, as she spoke, towards the farther door of the apartment, but the hand of Prestwyche arrested her progress.

"Forgive my interruption, but say before you give liberty to the captive, will you accompany the gift with that, without which it were worthless and unpalatable?"

"I understand you not—our time is brief—my absence may be discovered, and—"

"In a word—do you propose to me to fly alone?"

"Alone, Reginald? how else?—but haste."

"Then my habitation is here—I stir not hence. The dungeon your presence has brightened, shall be sweeter than the air of freedom unshared by you."

"Why, now thou ravest—or thou, or I am sadly changed. Ellice Chiverton did think she was loved by one, who was worthy alike to give and to receive affection; one whose manly resolution could arm him with the armour of endurance, and the unstained heraldry of whose shield should be like his heart, free from aught of waverings or hesitation. I have mistaken—I took you for another."

"I have not deserved this, Ellice. I ask no witness but your own heart, to tell you that could danger, could suffering win you, they were in my regard but a feather's weight. But fate hath so—or seems so to conspire to blast my

hopes, and dash from my grasp the guerdon that seems just yielded to me, that by heaven, now that I see you thus beside me, and hear that voice once more, I dare not, will not part from you."

"Forgive me, if I spoke harshly. I doubt not your disinterested and generous affection. But how wouldst thou serve thyself or me, by lingering in this dungeon? Thy flight, too, must be speedy—more speedy than could be were I thy companion. But hasten, my Reginald, the lamp's flame trembles already—should it expire ere I accomplish my return, 'twere ill for me—thou must away."

The lamp, indeed, stood in need of trimming, and cast such a dubious and unstable light around, as added greatly to the gloom of the place. To an unacquainted eye, it would have been a fund of strange astonishment, to have gazed into the vault, whose extent seemed augmented by the dim glare that was insufficient to display the extremities of the chamber. And

there, like a thing of a better sphere, descended to cheer and support exhausted mortality in its struggles with the ills of the earth, stood Ellice Chiverton by her fainting lover. Her features were placid, and lit with the sad sweet smile that was peculiar to them, and fraught with the mingled expression of a woman's fondness, and a spirit's purity, and all tempered and strengthened with the noble and unchanging fortitude, that like the lofty elm, clothed in the tendrils and blossoms of the woodbine, lent dignity to the softer beauties of her nature. Her long dark hair streaming in waving clusters down her shoulders, seemed lost in the darkness, as if she had, indeed, been one of the "light creatures of the element," who, her task of mercy fulfilled, was about to fade into the air, and float back to the fairy dwellings of her nativity.

Nor was there wanting in the demeanour of Prestwyche, something of the deep, ardent devotion, with which a sufferer might be supposed to regard the being we have imagined. As in

spite of her words he yet lingered, he gazed on her with those looks of deep, though sad affection, that the heart never mistakes or doubts. They were not unreturned—it was the exchange, the wedding of the spirit, in an hour of suffering, but an hour, which they who have so known, would not barter for a world of less disturbed enjoyment.

She again urged his flight—he repeated his solicitations that it might not be alone. She replied to him gently, but firmly; he felt, but would not even to himself acknowledge, a conviction of the truth of her words.

"And now," added Ellice, "thou hast oft in happier days, seemed to reproach me—nay—interrupt me not—thou hast done so, if not in words, yet in tones and looks as easy to be understood—that I have been, as thou deemed'st, too backward in acknowledging the feelings I have felt for thee. Thou didst wrong, Reginald—it is not in professions that a woman's love is shewn. But I will tell thee now, for

in a moment like this words may have free course—that never woman loved man better than Ellice Chiverton has loved thee. And by that love—by thine own—by all our mutual hopes—I do again conjure thee to fly; 'tis but madness to stay. Dost thou still linger? I have conjured thee by all that is dearest to me, and should be so to thee—wilt thou deny me?"

The blushes which on her avowal of her love had rushed into her cheeks, still mantled there as she ceased; there was a glowing earnestness in her tone, and manner, that would not be resisted. Prestwyche yielded to it.

"Promise me only," said he, "that when I return to save and deliver thee, thou wilt no longer baffle my hopes; that those ties shall then bind us, which no mischance shall have power to sever!—promise me this, and I will leave thee;—thou knowest not how much that word costs me."

"Do I not," returned the maiden; "thinkest thou, that I too cannot feel—that thine alone is

the pang of this separation? But away—I promise what thou askest, but longer I must not tarry."

She opened a small door nearly opposite the one by which she had entered. The fresh current of the breeze that rushed into the vault had nigh extinguished the lamp.

"Follow me," said Ellice, "thou wilt soon be free."

Prestwyche sighed, as he half unconsciously echoed her words. But she hastened on, allowing no time for further converse.

The passage into which they now entered, resembled the one Ellice had already traversed, except that it was yet more rude. As they proceeded the air they breathed became purer; the dashing of the waters more and more distinct. Presently the bright steady beams of the moon, shedding their light into the extremity of the passage, announced that they were near the opening in the rocks, which formed the sole

external extrance to the wretched caverns they had left.

" Now," said Ellice, as she stepped on the flat ledge of rock, under which, at the distance of some yards, ran the river, " now, Reginald, thou art free, and now we part—nay, thou knowest we must, and thou, I tell thee, art not the only sufferer in this. These steps," she shewed him the rude ones, hewn in the rock, will conduct thee to the summit of the bank; beware of the turn there; I have heard me 'tis hard to pass."

The path which she pointed out was well worthy of notice, from the singular propriety with which it had been framed to escape observation, by any whose attention was not particularly directed to it. The entrance from the cavern opening, as has been said, on a flat rock, was concealed on each side by thick clusters of underwood, whose roots found in the face of the rock a scanty, but as it seemed sufficient

soil, and the impending projection of the stone above, precluded the possibility of the opening being discerned from the brink of the rock. The wood on the side of the opening from which the steps took their rise had been restrained or cut away, so as to form a sort of natural archway, which, without diminishing the secrecy of the spot, obviated the difficulties that the unchecked growth of the wild vegetation would have presented to the progress of those leaving or seeking the vaults. The steps were shaded by a curtain of the same shrubs, and the summit was so garlanded with foliage, and cast in so deep a gloom by the shade of the sycamores that clustered there, that the chances of discovery by an uninitiated person were almost infinitely small.

There was a strange contrast between the beaming and placid garb, in which the external objects around the lovers lay at this moment clothed, and the perturbed feelings with which they were themselves possessed. The moon

shone in a heaven unspotted by a cloud. The river rolling calmly over its smooth bed, reflected, with the fidelity of a Venetian mirror, every illumined object that presented itself on either side of the stream; its serenity disturbed only where, stealing by the base of the rock, the waters were impeded in their course by some straggling projection, with which to raise a noisy but vain strife. All else was still.

They gazed on each other silently;—to a chance looker-on, it might have seemed with placidity, so calm and undisturbed was every feature. But the keener observer would have seen in that very calm, the index of that inward struggle with affliction which far more than its passionate overflow, tears and consumes the heart where it abides.

"Farewell!" there was a tremor in Ellice's voice as she spoke the word—to her lover it was as a knell—he echoed it unconsciously. She pointed again to the path he was to take; for a moment he held her folded to his breast—for a

moment her cheek reposed on his; he tore himself away, and springing up the rock, was lost to her sight.

The compelled firmness which had hitherto sustained Ellice, deserted her now, and she sank exhausted against the rock. Presently she revived.

"Farewell," she repeated, "it is for ever—I know—I feel it is. Unhappy maiden! and more unhappy he who loves so wretched a one! Fortune has been unkind to us—me it will soon cease to oppress; this little heart has beat too long without happiness; the spirit's endurance would last; the frame it inhabits must break beneath the burden."

On preparing to retrace her steps down the passage, she perceived now for the first time, that her lamp was extinguished, and she shrunk from exploring in darkness, the wilderness of the vaults. She stepped into the passage, and started back again. She wondered at her own

irresolution. "Surely," said she, "I spoke too hastily of endurance, I have borne this last parting—do I shrink from a dark vault?"

In fact, the agitation she had undergone, and the unusual pitch to which she had been compelled to wind up her temper of mind, to enable her to bear the conflict, were succeeded by the usual effects of all violent excitement, and she now suffered under that nervous relaxation, which affects so as almost for the time to destroy the powers of thought and action. She endeavoured as much as possible to recover herself, and again proceeded.

The passage was of considerable length, and near the opening the floor was broken and uneven. She stepped cautiously on; often stopping in her course, and trembling with apprehensions, whose origin she was unable to account for. Scarcely did her limbs obey the directions of her will; weak and fearful, she wondered why her courage was now less than

when she had first entered the vaults. She was now approaching the extremity of the passage, when a sudden noise arrested her progress.

She heard the sound of footsteps entering the vault from which she had so lately liberated Prestwyche, and this was followed by loud and violent exclamations of rage and disappointment. Ellice shrunk back instinctively into a broken recess, of which there were several in the sides of the passage.

"Good heaven!" she exclaimed, "it is my brother."

It was indeed Chiverton, who, along with the Moor, had accompanied the physician; when after a long interval he prepared to visit the prisoner and dress his wounds.

The Knight had hoped, that Prestwyche, under fear of continued imprisonment, and finding himself wholly in his enemy's power, would without much difficulty be induced to consent to terms, which would prevent his so acting as

further to obstruct the schemes and actions of Chiverton. The physician, indeed, judged otherwise, and probably better. However, they were not permitted to make the experiment.

When on arriving at the dungeon in which Prestwyche had been confined, it was found tenantless, the fury of Chiverton was excessive. The remonstrances of the physician at length abated his vehemence.

"Canst thou tell me then—thou that art *cool* and *calm*—canst thou tell me what will be—or rather what will not be, the issue of this accursed chance? tell me that he will not return to seek—to carry away—to *marry* Ellice Chiverton, and to rob me of all, to triumph over the Chiverton; aye, that so there shall not be a churl but shall point and grin at the beggarly Knight, and—but enough, will it not be so; aye or no, be brief and quick?"

"It will!" was the reply of the physician.

"It will," echoed Chiverton; "thou sayest

well. And now, task thy wit again, can it furnish a shield against the stroke?—is there remedy or none?"

"There is."

"Speak then—what is it?"

"I must first premise, Sir, that what I suggest may be most unpleasant to you; still you will remember, it is free for you to adopt, or to reject."

"Scymel, I tell thee, man, torture me not with this trifling; this hour may be my last; the inheritance of my fathers totters over my head. I may not survive the fall; speak—be thy plan what it may, I can hear patiently."

"Then, Sir, when Prestwyche returns with the harpies of the law to search this mansion, it follows not they who seek must find. Our coming hither hath taught us this."

"Thou would'st have Ellice removed."

"*Removed!*" repeated Scymel, his features at the same time contorting themselves into a smile, which was frightfully reflected from

the countenance of the Moor. "Aye, Sir, removed."

"But whither—whither—speak out?"

"Nay, Sir, I may but point out the path—to guess whither it conducts hath stranded the wits of many. But you are displeased at this suggestion."

A sudden and angry flush did, indeed, for a moment, deepen the Knight's cheek. But he repressed the rising wrath with more self-command than he was wont to exhibit. He turned to the speaker.

"No, Richard, it shall not be so. She hath, indeed, impeded the prosecution of my schemes, and put a gulf between me and that I aim at. But I have not yet lost all recollection that I am a man,—*I* am not yet wholly *devil*. Stay—what noise was that?"

A faint and half suppressed scream interrupted him.

"I know not," said Scymel; "it came from yon passage."

" Follow me then," said Chiverton, drawing his sword, and he was rushing forward when his progress was stayed. It was Ellice, that springing into the vault, fell before him, and clung to her brother's feet.

" Mercy—mercy, my brother," she exclaimed, " do not—do not kill your Ellice."

" Good heaven, what brought her here? Kill thee, my sister! I would myself die ere harm thee. Nay, nay, be comforted, fear nothing; no harm shall betide thee."

" Oh, bless you—bless you—I know not—I thought I heard—but I am very—very foolish: —my head is—" She drew her hand over her forehead—looked up with a languid and vacant smile, and sank in utter exhaustion into the arms of her brother.

" Thou hast gone near to do that thyself which thou would'st counsel me," said the Knight, in a low tone to Scymel, and with a look of bitter indignation.

"And is life, think you, Sir, such as she holds it, worth retaining?"

"Be silent, no more of that. Ellice—my sister, look up—fear not: what dreadest thou in my arms? I would to heaven she would recover. If harm happens her, look to it—for thyself."

"Rather, Sir," returned the physician, "look to the cause that brought her hither, and for which I surely am not accountable. How Prestwyche escaped, is no longer a mystery."

"She would not—nay, she could not," exclaimed the Knight, eagerly, as wishing to crush in its inception, some painful thought—"and yet, as thou say'st, what else should bring her here?—and by the mermaid, did I think she had set him free—it would go more to destroy me, than all thy sophistry ten times told." He paused, and again renewed his endearments to Ellice.

"How passion fools him," said the physician

internally. But now, he was ready for mortal strife with me—for that I hinted aught affecting her; and now he is nigh as ready to sacrifice her; and for what? Because she has shewn favour to one with whom he has a quarrel, as if woman did not ever run counter to the wind of others wishes. And this is the nobility of a reasoning animal. Cut me an ash sapling, and I will carve me a man out of it, that shall be the same in summer, and in winter; and weigh him in the balance with one of these weathercocks, and I wit well, who shall kick the beam."

His meditations were interrupted by Chiverton, who perceived signs of reviving consciousness in the form he supported.

"She revives—thank God—she revives!" he exclaimed, "how is it with thee, Ellice?"

She opened her eyes slowly—gazed vacantly around her. "Reginald, my Reginald." The name she pronounced, operated as a spell upon her brother, and recalled in tenfold force the violence he had before suppressed. Ere she

had uttered another word, he had dashed her to the ground—the act was scarce done, when he threw himself on his knees beside her, and essayed to lift her.

" No—no—touch me not," she exclaimed, for the shock had fearfully shaken off the torpor, under which she had laboured ; " touch me not ; you are not my brother—you will murder me—help—God help me !" and dashing with frenzied haste through the door of the passage, she retraced, with all her speed, her steps towards the rock.

Her senses are gone !" exclaimed Chiverton, " and I wretch have,"—without completing his sentence, he speeded in pursuit of her.

In the heated, enfeebled state of her imagination, Ellice heard in the pursuing footsteps of her brother, and in his invocations to her to desist from her flight, only the fearful sounds of death: violently as she exerted herself to gain the extremity of the passage, her brother gained fast upon her, when the light from the opening

burst at a short distance upon her sight. Yet the outstretched hand of Chiverton would, ere she had reached it, have arrested her flight, had he not at this moment stumbled on the broken and irregular path. He fell heavily, and was stunned; whilst Ellice having emerged from the cave, sprung wildly up the path which Prestwyche had previously ascended. At the very turn, of which she had warned him, the foot of the unfortunate girl slipped. His name was on her lips as she fell.

There was a deep sullen plunge.

The circling gyres, that dimpled the smooth surface of the river, as the waters closed, glittered with cold mockery in the moonbeams. They spread wider and wider, and wider:—at length the last vibration ceased, and the stream glided on smoothly as before.

"Who, what are ye?" exclaimed Chiverton, after a long interval, as the physician and Mahmood raised him from the ground; "where am

I—tell me, tell me? ah well, I know ye now, I have had a fearful dream.—Dream? 'tis surely no more—yet assure me—tell me 'twas but a dream, and no waking reality, that hath damned my senses in the thought that—By heavens! that scream I heard—it must be!"—He rushed with frantic violence to the entrance of the cave, and but for the joint strength of Scymel and the Moor, would have precipitated himself into the river.

"Unhand me!" he exclaimed—"Death, am I not free to come and to go when and whither I will, but ye must hold me like a child—ye would not stay *her*—Oh, Ellice, my sister—and thou, inhuman dog, must—but why blame another—let me look to my own burden; 'tis enough to sink me, and mine, and this rock, and these lands, to the deepest pit of hell—Kind, gentle girl—that didst love thy enemy, even when he tortured thy heart to the utmost—where shall I find other love like thine? He

ceased, and remained lost in the deep and indistinct wilderness of scarcely conscious thought, that enwraps the mind after violent agitation.

Broken words escaped from his lips, but unaddressed to any one. His countenance was torn with rapidly succeeding muscular contortions—a cold clammy moisture sat on his brow, and his whole frame was convulsed with the throes of passion.

The physician, after a short lapse, essayed to work some change in him, "Not now—not now;" and in a lower tone he proceeded, "she loved me, and I have murdered her."

The inward struggle could be sustained no longer. He became insensible in the arms of his attendants, and was in that state removed by them.

"I know not what to think of this," said the physician inwardly—"to-morrow, he has told me, the wedding is to be; and as he now is, there seem little hopes of its accomplishment. I would myself it had been otherwise; I wished not it

should thus terminate. But it was so fated. And she died by her own act—that I will represent to him, and it may be, I shall recall him to his self-command. If he were but firm—but the weakness of nature defeats the fairest plans."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRIDAL.

There's death in his face already.—

WEBSTER.

THE morning was by no means answerable to the expectations, which the curious in the weather at Chiverton Hall had formed from the beauty of the preceding evening. The sun rose with a sickly glare, and seemed as if weary of his occupation. Dusky clouds chased each other indolently across the sky, gathering, mass over mass, till the whole wore one uniform dusky curtain. Then there was a low, moaning, disagreeable wind — in short it was one of those dark raw mornings, which no one loves,

and which nervous people hold in utter abhorrence.

If the fair Isabel on her bridal morning rose later than her wont, she will doubtless find excuse—with lady readers at least. They will readily conceive, that the night had been one of little repose. At length, however, she sprung from her couch.

"What a slug-a-bed have I been!" said she —"Cicely, what's o'clock?"

"After nine, madam."

"Awell—I shall have my father seeking me anon—Cicely, do thou assist me, and take heed, wench, that thou use all thy skill to-day."

"Never trust me else, madam; all your bridal clothes are ready; beauties they are, I wot, fit for a prince's bride."

"Help me to don them then, or thou wilt praise them till I loathe them. But Cicely, tell me, didst thou hear aught last night?"

"Hear aught, madam! preserve us, what madam?"

"Nay, nay, thou need'st not turn so pale, and look as if thy two eyes had quarrelled with their dwelling places; I do think it was but fancy."

"But what, madam, what was it?"

"Nothing—nothing—I dreamt I heard a scream, that was all—I slept indifferently, 'twas but a dream—yet it was a fearful cry. I would not have heard it waking for all the gay trappings thou hast laid out there."

"But are you sure, madam, it was but a dream? It might be—they say—"

"Might be what?—what do they say?—who say?—thou art not wont to be so sparing of thy words."

"They say, madam—that is the servants, that the vaults under the hall are—"

"Are what?—prythee, on with thy tale."

"That something walks there."

"Undoubtedly—rats, Cicely, in abundance—but what is the story, let us have the whole legend?"

"Why, madam, a great many years ago, I forget how long, a lady was murdered in this hall; there's a chamber, madam, they say that goes by her name, and none ever enters it, but Sir John himself, and the leech, master Scymel, and that frightful black."

"But why was she murdered, Cicely?"

"Nobody can tell, madam—that is, none of the servants; but old master Misseltoe, the steward, they say knows; but he is as stiff as his wand, and as great as his gold chain, and no one cares to ask him of it."

"Unfortunate lady," said Isabel, speaking rather to herself than to her attendant: "it was a female voice, I thought I heard—but it could not be—it was certainly but a dream. Cicely, who knocks?"

The voice of her father prevented the waiting woman's reply.

"Why, how now, my lady lay a-bed, is sleeping the order of the day think you? Swords and bucklers! were I Sir John, I would send you

back to whence you came, an you are so slow to become his bride, I trow I would."

"I will be with you forthwith, dear Sir.—Cicely, my kirtle now."

"Well, look that you speed, as you would be in credit to-day, lass," shouted the old Knight, and they heard his footsteps retracing the gallery.

"And so you think, madam, that this ghost—"

"Nay, nay, Cicely, I know that this ghost were meat and drink to thee for a month, were I idle enough to feed thy humour with talking; but speed thee, there lacks time to raise this spirit further now. Give me that chain of pearl; now how does this head tire look?"

"Nay, madam, I swear 'tis beautiful—as beautiful as the Lady Lomax's that came to your father's hall last Lammastide—the poor lady—"

"Why poor lady, Cicely?"

"Ah, madam, you have not forgot how the young nobleman that was to wed her was killed in some unlucky brawl, and she only lived a

poor month after. I wonder if she ever saw him after his death; they say—"

"Now avaunt thee, truly the girl is distraught. Why, thou silly one, thou wert sure born near a church-yard; thy converse betokens thee fit but for a sexton's wife. Thou eternal death's head—but we wear away the minutes—beshrew me—I have laughed and rattled with thee, and my heart feels as heavy the while; lend me thy arm, lass, we will to my father, I am ready now."

They joined the old Knight accordingly, who impatiently awaited in the next chamber his daughter's appearance. Here they were joined by Isabel's other attendant, and shortly afterwards a knock at the door of the apartment, announced that Chiverton attended to claim his bride.

He was accompanied by several of the occupants of the house, all of whom, except the physician, tarried when he entered in the gallery. He advanced, and saluted his mistress.

Sir Gamelyn rallied both on their dolorous

looks. The maiden only blushed an answer, but Chiverton essayed an excuse. Great anxiety, he said, for the success of his suit he had ever felt, and never more than now, when he seemed almost in possession of the prize. For the lady, anxiety though of another—he would hope not painful nature, must attend the near prospect of entering into a new path of life. No daughter —and his Isabel was the most dutiful of daughters—could, without deep regret, contemplate the quitting the paternal care of such a father as Sir Gamelyn Vancouver.

To this compliment the object of it made a suitable return; and it was fortunate for Chiverton that the hesitating tone—broken words, and absence of mind, which he in his short reply displayed, and which, but for the presence and glances of the physician, had been still more obvious, seemed to Sir Gamelyn only so many testimonies to the sincerity of the speaker.

"Well then," said he, "I must needs be the merrymaker for the whole party, for I guess,

Master Doctor here, will not be prevailed on to unbend from his professional gravity. And yet, I too am fain to grieve, that these our nuptials may not be graced by the light of——"

"The day is indeed gloomy," interrupted the physician, (who perceived whither Sir Gamelyn's discourse tended, and justly feared its effect upon Chiverton,) "unfortunately perverse, but as the priest, doubtless, has ofttimes conned the same lesson, we may hope his memory may assist his dim eyes, and the dimmer light—if not, our wedding must be by candle light; will that serve, Sir Gamelyn?"

"In troth, it will not," replied Sir Gamelyn, "your candlelight may well suit the artificial faces of your court ladies, who, I am told, use to smear their cheeks with villanous compounds; but my girl is a country lass, and can shew a colour of her own—or could yesterday, for swords and bucklers! there's not as much left now as would serve for a blush to give grace to a lady ant, or the bride of a cockchaffer."

"You are too severe, Sir Gamelyn," said Scymel; "but shall we proceed? I doubt not we are waited for."

"With all my heart," answered Vancouver, "yet I could wish we had been accompanied by——"

"I am sorry to mention," again interrupted the physician, "that our friend Wayword, to whom you allude, will not be present to perform the ceremony, and another——"

"How!" exclaimed Vancouver, "shall we not have our good priest—what, in our Lady's name, hath carried him away?"

"Some weighty and pressing business, concerning his own kindred, called him from the hall yesternoon."

"Beshrew the business then—I would it had found another season. But who is placed in his stead?"

"The clergyman of the next parish—a man of piety and learning."

"I doubt it not—I doubt it not, Master

Scymel, but I would—but it matters not. Have you visited your patient this morning?"

Chiverton, who during the dialogue between the physician and Sir Gamelyn, had so far become master of himself as to address a few sentences to the bride, turned at this question, and looked for a moment as if he hoped from the words of the physician something that should turn the horrid reality, which possessed his soul and memory, into a dream or chimera, which, when explained, should relieve him from the load that pressed upon him. But the hasty negative of the physician, recalled the fearful certainty.

"I know nothing more," said Vancouver, "than her presence, that were wanting to complete the gladness of this occasion. You, Sir John, must wish it as a brother, and we——"

"I do—I do," burst from Chiverton's lips, while the writhings of his countenance spoke his intense inward agony. "I do wish her here, as I hope for—" and breaking from them, he

hastily retreated to the recess of the casement; "hope—Oh wretch—wretch—what hast thou to do with hope?"

His last words were ejaculated in such a deep but low and broken tone of despair, that they were unheard by his companions, while the physician strove to draw away the attention of Vancouver and his daughter from the disorder of Chiverton.

"I pray you, Sir Gamelyn," said he, "to make no more mention to Sir John of his sister's unhappy state. You see how it dispossesses him. It ever did so, and we have been cautious of awakening this violence of feeling. And the priest awaits us. I will remind Sir John." And approaching the Knight, he recalled his attention to the business of the day.

"Begone then—take them with thee. I will meet you in the chapel presently."

"Nay, Sir John—it may not be—you must needs accompany your bride."

"Well—well, I will—but tarry a moment.

Walter—thou hast damned—destroyed me; yet, why do I accuse any but myself, for——"

"Let me entreat, Sir, that you will not now give yourself up to these groundless troubles; the past may not be recalled, and I doubt not to satisfy you ere long, that no course could have been better or otherwise, than that you so much lament."

"Thou canst not, Scymel—thou canst not. Raise her from yon waters, give her life, and place her as she was three short days since, and I will bless thee, though thou should'st plunge me where she lies: would that I lay there now, and that she might live whom—whom I have murdered."

"The bride of Prestwyche, and——"

"Away, tempter!" exclaimed Chiverton, but still in an under tone, and turning from the physician, he compelled himself to a more restrained demeanour, and advancing to Isabel took her hand in his.

"My mistress will forgive me, for taking

what is not yet mine. I am impatient to have my title to it made perfect."

"Come along then—come along—Master Parson will needs be out of all patience," exclaimed Vancouver, as he took his daughter's other hand, and they moved to the door of the apartment.

The crowd of gallants who had attended Chiverton, and who occupied the gallery, assiduously made way for the lady as she came, accompanied as we have mentioned from the chamber. Among these, Mahmood Bali had placed himself, and it so happened that he was the first object upon which Isabel looked upon entering the gallery. With the instinctive aversion, with which she had ever regarded the Moor, she shrunk back for a moment. Chiverton perceived it, and pushing Mahmood roughly aside, passed on with his mistress. The followers of Chiverton eagerly crowded after, and none save the physician, who was the last to leave the chamber, noted the smile which far more fear-

fully than any literal expression of rage, contorted the features of his associate. On seeing him the Moor hastily retreated.

"I would not," said the physician, in the musing self-addressing mood, in which more than in converse with others, he was wont to indulge, "I would not, were I Chiverton, have been the object of the kind glance that Mahmood bestowed upon him, for the lands of a county. A harsh word or more, in private, he might not regard, or at least might treasure up with other slight offences till some distant period; but an open affront will work upon him, if I read him right, as a coal to the powder, and 'twill be well if the explosion be not sudden. But Mahmood must not thus interfere with my views—the issue of this experiment upon the weak material of humanity must be guided by me alone. This ceremony will be about to commence, I suppose, by this."

He left the gallery, and sought the chapel of the hall.

It was a spot of some interest, and well suited to give zest to the imaginative ritual of the Romish church, under the supremacy of which it had been built and consecrated, and had formerly been the usual place of religious attendance, as well for the occupants and retainers of the house, as for the dwellers in the neighbourhood for some extent. It was owing to these circumstances that, in size and style of decoration, it was greatly superior to the mere private chapels occasionally appended to considerable dwellings.

Arriving at the bottom of the great staircase, Scymel turned to the right, and tracing a narrow passage between the dining hall and the Maiden's chamber, entered by a low arch into the chapel. Here he hung back for a moment.

Although the further extremity of the chapel, which was bowed in a semi-circular form, and was the only part visible from the exterior of the building, was crowded in its whole extent with windows, the light communicated through

them was but little. The rich stained glass, with which they were filled, obscured by dirt, admitted in the brightest days but a dim and scanty portion of the sunbeams. The gloom which had brooded over the morning, was not yet dispelled, and the chapel looked dark and sad. Ancient flags and pennons, borne in former times by distinguished progenitors of the family, hung in mournful drapery over the monuments, which respect or ostentation had reared over the ashes of the dead. There, too, were suspended the arms of the departed warriors, and the wind which found entrance to the chapel, as it swept around the stained, and in some places decayed walls, shook these trophies of departed valour, while the flapping of the pennons, and the creaking of the armour at intervals, broke the silence of the place. The priest had not yet commenced the exercise of his function, and the conversation of the assembled inmates of the hall was carried on in a low, and, in the physician's situation, inaudible tone.

The company were divided into two groups. That including the immediate actors in the approaching ceremony, consisting of Chiverton and his mistress, her father and her maidens, stood with the priest near the altar, an elaborate piece of workmanship, brought as was believed by an ancestor of the family from foreign parts, and to which in more religious, or more credulous times, sundry virtues had been ascribed. At a short distance, stood Faynton, Vivian, and the other gallants of the place, among whom the venerable Master Misseltoe had placed himself. One or two of the female domestics were seated on the benches, which supplied the place of the modern convenience of pews.

The bride was attired in white, after the custom of brides, and stood by the altar as pale almost as her own vestments. The fashion of her apparel was simple, but not without either elegance, or richness. Chains of pearl suspended from her neck, supported a small golden cross, and bracelets of the same material confined her

small and delicate wrists. A band of silver net-work surrounded and displayed her waist. There was a solemnity—a melancholy in her gently cast down eyes, which was not sadness. Feeling was all awake—in a young and purely virtuous woman, can it at such a time be otherwise?

'Tis a strange—an almost fearful transmigration to the heart, to the heart of woman at least, this abandonment of the lares of the affections. Even bondage is said by custom to lose its horrors—the willing bondage of the soul, to those among whom it has grown and flourished, cannot be easily relinquished. Even inanimate objects, things that at first borrowed their share in the affections from their association with the friends and companions of our lives, exert in the moment of separation, a winning reaction, and draw largely upon our remembrances and our regrets. The home of her childhood and of her youth, with all its accompaniments—her own latticed arbour—her shady walks—her

quiet occupations—a thousand fond ideas of the past, arrayed themselves before the mind of Isabel, and deepened the grief which the parting from her father—now her only and long loved parent, gave birth to. For the moment was close by that was to change her home, her affections, and her duties—to resign her to another to whom her heart must promise, "thy people shall be my people;—whither thou goest I will go, and where thou diest I will die." It was a heavy trial, and she sustained it with difficulty.

If the features of Chiverton seemed, to careless observers, placid, and less indicative of emotion than those of the bride, it was not that thought slumbered within him. Grief may seek to dispel or weaken itself in the tempest of passion—despair stagnates like a dull lake, whose unstirred waters rot in their own stillness. Never did manly form and gay attire veil a heart less at repose than Chiverton's, as he stood by the altar, from which his eyes were studiously averted.

"Now wit defend me from matrimony," whispered the beau Vivian, "if its approach only transforms a man into a thing more melancholy than a night owl."

"Lack of wit," observed another in reply, "with lack of means, are like to be thy more effectual preservative against the contagion. For a couple of silver tagged points I will gage to defend thee from marriage with any of gentler degree than a milk maid."

"'Twere a shame to waste good points on so indifferent hose as thine," retorted Vivian, glancing first at his own gay garments, and then at the less fashionable drapery of the other speaker.

"A truce—a truce with this," said Faynton, "you two are eternally at your quips. I would you could bestow some of your ready spirit on Sir John, who, in sober truth, seems a most sad man for a husband. This day, I think, has infected us all. A five minutes sunshine were worth thy new beaver, Vivian."

"Now what a——"

"Silence, man—Sir John, the priest is beginning," said Faynton, interrupting the answer of the impatient gallant.

"Sir John the priest," said he who had before spoken, "seems as dull as Sir John the Knight to the full. They are well matched, faith."

"Peace, peace—thou wilt interrupt the business," whispered Faynton.

The clergyman having assumed his place at the altar, had now commenced the reading of the beautiful service, which the reformed liturgy assigned to the solemnization of the marriage ceremony. Though the voice of the reader was harsh, his manner was energetic and impressive, forcibly chaining the attention of his auditors, many of whom were seldom in the habit of attending the devotional exercises, which were usually performed in the chapel by Wayword.

When the priest arrived at the solemn adjuration that requires a disclosure of impediments

to the union, Chiverton started, and cast a furtive and hurried glance around him, as fearing some horrid interruption of the ceremony. But no one spake, and the Knight's emotion was perceived only by the priest, and by Scymel, who had silently approached. On the former it was not lost, and in a louder and more authoritative tone, he repeated the request. But no response interfered with his progress, and the ceremony proceeded.

At the conclusion of the service, the clergyman intimated his intention of delivering a discourse to the new married pair, on the discharge of their relative duties. This annunciation, which was little palatable to any present, was forthwith followed by the promised sermon. This was delivered with the straight forward earnestness characteristic of the non-conforming clergy, of whom the present holder forth was a member, though, like many of his brethren, he made no scruple of retaining a benefice under the same establishment which he railed

against as usurped and idolatrous. On the present occasion he was merciful to his congregation; that is to say, he was content with a brief bestowal of spiritual food, the short space of an hour and forty-five minutes only being occupied by the discourse. At length, he concluded.

"Now heaven be praised," exclaimed Vivian, as they left the chapel, "that we are escaping from bondage! I would dinner were ready. I incline not to make this spiritual food my only aliment. And how now, Master Priam—how is it, venerable Sir, that you are not looking to the marshalling of the flesh pots, rather than dispending your time here?"

"An it please you, fair Sir," replied the captious steward, "to mind your doublets and your ruffs, your Spanish hose, and your rebata, the curation of which I ween forms your sole business, I will essay to discharge my functions without the aid of your counsel."

"Bravely spoken, old Mont Blanc," returned

the other; " but chafe thyself not, lest it cause thee less precisely to discharge thy functions, according to thy own most choice phrase. Away! I will in mere kindness, assist thy steps, which are somewhat slower than thy tongue."

And he pushed the old man along, who had nigh suffered consequent prostration, whilst the expression of his wrath was drowned in the jeers and laughter of those near him.

Chiverton and his bride, accompanied by Sir Gamelyn and the physician, had meanwhile sought the apartment allotted to the old Knight and his daughter. Vancouver exerted himself to dispel the apparent sadness that clouded the pair. In some degree he succeeded, for Chiverton rendered aware that the abstract and silent demeanour which he had hitherto involuntarily displayed, might excite a degree of surprise, the dispelling of which would be a difficult task, laboured to resume his customary presence of mind. Besides, the eyes of the physician were upon him, and he was unwilling

to seem incapable of that self-command, which gave Scymel so great a real, though not avowed ascendancy over Chiverton. And as the temperament of woman assimilates to that of the objects of her affections, the real gaiety of her father, and its imitation by Chiverton, had the desired effect upon Isabel.

The conversation which was carried on, had not long continued ere a thundering noise from below gave note of preparation of dinner; an annunciation that was speedily confirmed by the appearance of Master Misseltoe himself, who, arrayed in a new suit of office, by which acquisition his natural importance seemed doubled, came to conduct the Knight and his companions to the dining hall.

As they descended the great stairs, everything announced a season of extraordinary festivity. The dark wainscotting was hung with flowers, that sported among the fantastic carvings. Loud sounds of revelry burst from the court-yard, and an occasional window gave to

view the boisterous sports in which antiquity delighted, and with which the industrious research of modern times has made us familiar. Groups of wild figures, arrayed in all the extravagance of misrule, danced, sang, and shouted to music of more energy than taste. On the river might be seen the exercise of the water quintain, an amusement highly popular among a warlike and chivalrous people, and the object of which was to put to the test the dexterity of successive champions, who standing erect in a boat impelled forward with great speed by the rowers, aimed against a shield elevated from the water, a blow, which unless the striker succeeded in breaking his lance, infallibly dismounted and consigned him to a sound ducking. Many were the games, and great the prevailing jollity, whilst open tables, and broached barrels of humming ale, held out an invitation too kindly to be disregarded.

On entering the dining hall, they found the gallants of the place assembled, and waiting the

arrival of the master and the mistress of the feast. The steward having marshalled the Knight to the head of the ample board, stationed on either side the lady and her father. As for the rest there was no disputes of precedence, for all knew their seats, and assumed them, without resorting to the determination of Master Misseltoe.

The appearance of the room was splendid and imposing. Its style of finishing was highly ornamental, and additional decorations had been hung on the walls. The streaming locks of the mermaids, that looked from the deep cornice, were wreathed with unwonted garlands. Side tables were laden with plate, whose ponderous magnificence seemed to threaten to break down their support. At one of these tables, near their mistress, sat Isabel's two attendants, and at another were stationed two old men, whose harps denoted them members of a profession once highly esteemed, but which, even at the time of our history, was fading into neglect. A

number of domestics in gay apparel, and wearing the badge of the family, passed to and fro under the direction of Master Misseltoe, whose satisfaction seemed complete at having an opportunity of exerting his authority on an occasion of more than ordinary importance.

A table extending nearly the whole length of the spacious apartment, groaned under the weight of the viands it supported. These were of a substantial nature, foreign to modern times. Many dishes, too, unknown to the culinary professors of the nineteenth century, conveyed anticipatory delight to the gourmands of Chiverton Hall. Massive sirloins, like islands amid the oceans, supplied by the streams that flowed from them; the haunch bursting with the swell of its overflowing juices, were conspicuous among a crowd of minor flesh, fish and fowl. The stately peacock, once accounted a dainty, the turkey and the white plump chicken, the delicate representatives of the poultry yard, were accompanied by the heron and the quail.

The river, too, had contributed its share to the feast. The kingly salmon, the generous trout, and the gentle carp, had severally undergone the operations which are the guests delight, but the fret, fume, and choler of the cook. The melancholy pike, and his physician the tench, had met with the same fate, and quitted their weedy habitations for the savoury herbs among which they now reposed. Nor had the poisonous qualities attributed to the eel and his cousin the lamprey, guarded the one from roasting, or the other from stewing. There, too, the mimic architecture of pastry-work triumphed, and the imitative arts gave birth to numberless beasts, birds, trees, rocks, and men, compounded of perishable but palatable materials. These various condiments were presented in successive courses, and ponderous flagons, redolent of Canary and Rhenish, gave zest to the morsels.

The feast had commenced, when Chiverton, with a sudden exclamation of angry surprise, called to Misseltoe—

"What means that hatchment?" he exclaimed, pointing to a large one suspended at one end of the room, and on which were impaled the arms of Chiverton and Vancouver. The outer part of the hatchment adjoining the dexter partition of the shield, which supported the arms of Chiverton, was coloured of a sable hue, while the residue was left white, denoting, according to heraldic interpretation, that the husband no longer lived. The shield too was a lozenge as borne by a widow.

With a voice faltering with consternation at the ominous sight, the old man professed his entire ignorance of the cause or author of the appearance.

"Remove it then," said Chiverton, "and mind thee, Misseltoe—find out the slave that has done this—he shall rue it while he lives."

The first part of the injunction was obeyed, the remainder was not equally in the steward's power. On interrogation every one disclaimed knowledge of the deed. Superstitious fears

arose, from which no one save the physician remained wholly free. He, though ignorant as the rest of the origin of the object of dismay, was too little credulous to ascribe to supernatural agency, a circumstance which a very slight human exertion might effect. He saw nothing extraordinary in the painting of a board, and was not without a conjecture as to the artist.

The rage of Chiverton, on the report of the steward's ill success in his inquisition, was at first violent, but by degrees subsided into a troubled and agitated abstraction. He ate little, and mingled not in the conversation. His eyebrows occasionally contracted in sudden and convulsive fits, and his glance raised from time to time to the spot whence the hatchment had been removed, indicated the subject that still possessed his thoughts.

Meanwhile the feast proceeded. The instruments of the musicians breathed out by turns the notes of gaiety and joy, or the loftier harpings of warlike and chivalrous deeds. The

ready jest, the quip, the retort, circulated with the wine cup, and the celerity with which the solid food became invisible, declared the prowess of the company. The dimness of evening stole upon them, and the wax lights of the huge chandeliers were lit.

When the dishes were removed, Isabel arose to depart with her attendants. Chiverton, warned by a glance from the physician, accompanied her to the door of the apartment. As they parted she gazed anxiously at him—she knew not why, but a nervous apprehension oppressed her. He was confused, broke hastily from her, and returned to his seat. He made a temporary effort to recall his attention and self-command.

"Some wine here, ho!"—and he quaffed long and deeply the blushing tide. "And which of you now, gentlemen, can tell of the progress of the gallant Vivian and his rustic flame?"

"Ruined and undone, Sir John," answered Faynton: "he shortened his ruff in obedience

to the proclamation just made, and the damsel who likes not the fashion has discarded him therefore."

"In truth," said Chiverton, "that were too rough. To discard a courtly servant for such a trifle is indeed too much tyranny."

"Heed it not, heed it not, Master Vivian," exclaimed Vancouver, "an she get a new lover, get thou a new love. There is no scarcity that I wit of."

"There is Wilton shall give thee a song, man, to charm away melancholy," said a youth who sat between Faynton and Vivian.

"A song, a song—a Wilton, a Wilton," shouted half-a-dozen voices at once, in boisterous approbation of the suggestion.

"I need no song for melancholy," said Vivian, "seeing that I am not, have not been, and never will be melancholy for a woman. For I hold that a woman that likes me not, is not worthy of melancholy, and she who does, gives

no occasion. Nevertheless, I would gladly hear the song."

The song was on the point of commencing, when Chiverton, with the sudden eagerness of one who for the first time takes notice of a circumstance of painful import, inquired, casting at the same time a hurried glance around him—"Where is Mahmood Bali?"

No one had seen the Moor since the commencement of the feast.

"Let him be sought for instantly," said Chiverton.

The domestics obeyed, but were unsuccessful as in their former research. The cloud again spread itself over Chiverton's brow, with deeper gloom than before.

"Come, come, Wilton, thy song," exclaimed some one.

"Aye, aye," said Chiverton, "the song by all means—sing for her—sing for her—let's be merry—ha- ha—ha!"

The laugh, and the look by which it was accompanied were strangely wild. The physician, who sat near his patron, anxious to recall his disturbed attention, asked, " For whom must he sing? the Lady Isabel has left us."

By a momentary look and gesture, Chiverton directed the attention of the querist to the other end of the room, " For her—for her," said he in a subdued tone.

The physician looked accordingly, but saw nothing to which to apply the words of the Knight. He spoke not, but looked at Sir Gamelyn, fearful lest he should have taken alarm at the troubled demeanour of Chiverton. Fortunately the wine had taken a favourable effect on Vancouver, who in a state between sleeping and waking, seemed as if his powers of observation were wholly dormant. The song was again called for, and a light complexioned young man, with a preposterous doublet and a ruff, which unlike the courtly Vivian's, had evidently not allowed the authority of the pro-

clamation, cleared his tones for the ensuing ditty.

SONG.

I.

The rose that spreads its summer bloom,
Is false, and fades at winter's gloom;
The April beam, the flowers of May,
Are false, for soon they fleet away;—
But ladies, can you say me nay,
Women are more false than they.

II.

Yet trust the rose while summer smiles,
While yet its scent the sense beguiles;
Trust April's sun, nor fear its showers;
In Autumn look for May's white flowers;—
Do this—but seek not e'er to spy,
The glance of truth in woman's eye.

"Good—good—good," shouted Chiverton, as the singer concluded, "very good, ha—ha—ha," and he laughed fearfully, "sing again for her—her—her!"

The eyes of all the company, which had been turned towards the singer, were suddenly directed to Chiverton, and as suddenly averted

from the appalling appearance that presented itself. The guests sprung to their feet, and gazed at each other without speaking. All was terror and confusion. Even the physician for a moment shuddered at the object before him: no one ventured to break the silence that prevailed; a silence interrupted only by the exuberant gaiety of the revellers without, that jarred harshly on the ears of the astonished and confounded assembly.

It seemed that fear, or surprise, or both, had taken from every individual all self-recollection. None stirred—none spoke; all stood rooted to the ground, as under the influence of some potent and compelling spell.

A minute or two had elapsed, when the physician distinguished among the discordant noises without, the distant beat of horses' hoofs. These seemed to near rapidly. Scymel slipped unnoticed from the apartment.

"'Tis over," said he inwardly as he sought his own study, "and I have failed in my experi-

ment; the weakness of human nature has frustrated my intents. Had he but possessed more firmness it had been otherwise. But I suspect foul play here. Yon tramp comes nearer and nearer; 'tis Prestwyche and his band, his machinery of the Star-chamber. Let them search."

He opened the door of a small room appropriated to himself, in which the collection of drugs and chemical agents, and the philosophical apparatus he was wont to occupy himself with, had procured among the more ignorant inhabitants of the hall, the reputation for Scymel of being a wizard, or little better. The first object that presented itself to him, as he entered, was the form of the Moor enveloped in a riding cloak.

"Ha, my sable raven! my infidel carrion crow, dost thou fly from the prey when the work is done? Thou hast done quietly and surely; but what makest thou here? to bid me a kindly farewell ere thy departure? Hast thou aught to communicate?"

With the diabolical smile that occasionally visited the features of the Moor, he pointed first to a half empty vial that stood by, and then to the physician.

"Then I, too, have drank," exclaimed Scymel; "devil—thou shalt feel—but"—he endeavoured to reach a small bottle from a shelf; the Moor sprung forward and dashed the antidote from his grasp.

"Thou at least shalt share my fate," vociferated the physician, as he snatched up a short weapon resembling a stiletto that lay near, and aimed it at the Moor. They closed: the struggle for a moment was desperate: the Moor was too strong, and hurling his adversary to the ground, placed his foot firmly on the physician's breast, then folding his arms awaited with a deliberate gaze the death agonies of Scymel.

Even here the determination of the physician failed him not. Knowing with whom he had to do, he spoke not, but returned with a steady

gaze of scorn and defiance, the malignant and triumphing looks of his enemy, who chuckled his horrible laugh over the prostrate foe.

At length the poison began to work, and the devilish glee of Mahmood waxed greater and greater, as he feasted his eyes on the racking convulsions of his victim. They were too violent to endure long, yet the physician still lived, when the sound came of hasty footsteps approaching, and the loud and vengeful voice of Prestwyche was heard, directing and encouraging the search.

"There—there," faintly exclaimed Scymel, as the last breath trembled on his lips, "thou wilt not yet escape—the hangman's rope."

He spake no more, for the Moor believing it now time to depart, took his dagger from his girdle and with one blow concluded the scene. This done, he extinguished the lamp that lighted the chamber, and standing erect before the door awaited the result.

The door was burst open. The Moor

bounded forth—struck to the ground two men who endeavoured to stay him, and encountering Prestwyche, discharged a pistol at his head. The ball missed him, but blinded with the flash he was unable on the instant to act. Mahmood sprung by, overturned all that opposed him, and cleared the building. His deadly laugh was heard as he passed the threshold, and presently after the rapid tramp of a horse was heard, becoming gradually more dim and distant. Pursuit was vain, and none was attempted.

The issue of the search, is, perhaps, needless to dwell upon. Wayword and Beatrice were liberated from their confinement, but of the principal and unfortunate object of their search, no traces were discoverable. Faint rumours indeed there were of the shriek which had been heard the previous night, and these were the next day confirmed by the discovery, on the bank of the river, of a band, which had belonged to Ellice. The stream was searched but in-

effectually, and no more could be done. The bodies of Chiverton and the physician were, after due inquiry, committed to the family vault. The inhabitants of the hall dispersed. The hall itself passed into distant hands; the new proprietor did not choose to change his own residence; and the strange rumours that speedily flew about, prevented any one from becoming its tenant. During the civil wars, it was alternately occupied as a desirable station by the Roundheads, and the Cavaliers, and it is reported that a gay dissolute young fellow of the latter party, who took up his temporary lodgings in the Maiden's chamber, received such a revelation there, that he hastened in his new found pious zeal to join the republicans under Fairfax; a slight impediment to the execution of which design occurred, in his head being cloven by the sword of one of the royal troopers. This is the last tradition of note connected with the Hall.

Since the period of our history, it has gradually

fallen to decay, and is now reduced to a nest of hovels; its glories gone, though a gleam—a recollection of its pristine beauties still remains. But the hand of the spoiler it is feared approaches, and the present owner, a dealer in calves' heads, is said to meditate the razing of the edifice, and building in lieu what he terms "two christian-like houses of good stock brick."

THE END.

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